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# Spurgeon's Sermons

## The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

By Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

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Volume XI



Preached primarily at  
The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington  
1865



# SPURGEON'S SERMONS

## VOLUME XI

### THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

BY

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

(1834 – 1892)

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To  
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,  
IN THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,  
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,  
WORLD WITHOUT END,  
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER,  
AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON,  
THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST,  
THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF  
THE FREE GRACE OF GOD,  
HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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## **607 TRUE UNITY PROMOTED – EPH. 4:3**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 1st, 1865,**  
**by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” — Ephesians 4:3**

YOU WILL REMEMBER that for several years I have received my morning's text for the first Sunday in the year from an esteemed brother, a clergyman of the Church of England. This year, he very kindly sends me this verse, which I hope will be useful to us all, reminding us of our former faults, and of our present duty in the matter of “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The Pope has lately been most lustily cursing us all; according to his nature, of course, must be his utterances; we could not expect a blessing where no blessing abides; and if we get a curse, we only receive a polluted stream from a polluted fountain. It is an old saying that England never prospers so well as when the Pope curses her. I hope to see a year of great prosperity this year! Let the poor deluded priest curse as long as he will, our God shall turn it into a blessing. In former days, when some of the Churches of Christ began to shake off the yoke of Popedom from their necks, the plea urged against reformation was the necessity of maintaining unity. “You must bear with this ceremony, and that dogma no matter how antichristian and unholy; you must bear



with it, ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’” So spoke the old serpent in those early days. “The Church is one, woe unto those who shall create schism! It may be true that Mary is set up in the place of Christ; that images are worshipped; sticks and rotten rags adored, and pardons bought and sold for crimes of every kind. It may be that the so-called church has become an abomination and a nuisance upon the face of the earth, but still, ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,’ you must lie down, restrain the testimony of the Spirit of God within you, keep His truth under a bushel, and let the lie prevail.”

This was the grand sophistry of the Church of Rome. When, however, she could not seduce men by talking of love and union, she took upon herself to use her natural tone of voice, and cursed right and left right heartily—and so let her curse till she expires! Brethren, there was no reason in the argument of the Papist! If you will look at the text for a moment, you will see the text bids us endeavor to keep the unity of the *Spirit*—but it does not tell us to endeavor to maintain the unity of evil, the unity of superstition—or the unity of spiritual tyranny! The unity of error, of false doctrine, and of priest-craft may have in it the spirit of *Satan*—we do not doubt that—but that it is the unity of the *Spirit of God* we do utterly deny! The unity of evil we are to break down by every weapon which our hands can grasp—the unity of the Spirit which we are to maintain and foster is quite another thing. Remember that we are forbidden to do evil that good may come; and it is evil to restrain the witness of the Spirit of God within us! To conceal any truth of God which we have learned by revelation of God is evil; to hold back from testifying for God’s truth and Word—against the sin and folly of man’s inventions—would be sin of the blackest hue. We dare not commit the sin of quenching the

Holy Spirit even though it were with the view of promoting unity!

The unity of the Spirit never requires any sinful support—that is maintained not by *suppressing* the truth of God, but by publishing it abroad; the unity of the Spirit has for its pillars, among other things, the witnessing of spiritually enlightened saints to the one faith which God has revealed in His Word. That is quite another unity which would gag our mouths, and turn us all into dumb driven cattle to be fed or slaughtered at the will of priestly masters. Dr. McNeil has very properly said that a man can scarcely be an earnest Christian in the recent day without being a controversialist. We are sent forth today as sheep in the midst of wolves—can there be agreement? We are kindled as lamps in the midst of darkness—can there be accord? Has not Christ Himself said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword”? You understand how all this is the truest method of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, for Christ, the man of war, is Jesus the Peacemaker. But in order to the creation of lasting, spiritual peace, the ranks of evil must be broken, and the unity of darkness dashed to shivers. I pray God to always preserve us from a unity in which truth shall be considered valueless; in which principle gives place to policy; in which the noble and masculine virtues, which adorn the Christian hero, are to be supplemented by an effeminate affectation of charity. May the Lord deliver us from indifference to His Word and will; this only creates the cold unity of masses of ice frozen into an iceberg chilling the air for miles around—the unity of the dead as they sleep in their graves, contending for nothing—because they have neither part nor lot in all that belongs to living men.

There is a unity which is seldom broken—the unity of devils who, under the service of their great liege master, never disagree and quarrel. From this terrible unity keep us, O God

of heaven! The unity of locusts have one common object—the glutting of themselves to the ruin of all around. The unity of the waves of Tophet's fire, sweeping myriads into deeper misery—from this also, O King of heaven, save us forevermore. May God perpetually send some prophet who shall cry aloud to the world, “Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.” May there always be found some men, though they are rough as Amos, or stern as Haggai, who shall denounce again and again all league with error, and all compromise with sin, and declare that these are the abhorrence of God! Never dream that holy contention is at all a violation of my text. The destruction of every sort of union which is not based on the truth of God is a preliminary to the edification of the unity of the Spirit. We must first sweep away these walls of untempered mortar—these tottering fences of man's building— before there can be room to lay the goodly stones of Jerusalem's walls one upon the other for lasting and enduring prosperity.

In this spirit have I spoken to clear a way to reach my text. It is clear from the text that there *is a unity of the Spirit to be kept*; secondly, that *it needs keeping*; and thirdly, that *a bond is to be used*. When we have enlarged upon these points, we shall use the text in its practical application—first to Christians in their connection with other churches, and then to members of the same church in their connection with each other.

**I. First, THERE IS A UNITY OF THE SPIRIT OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS WHICH IS WORTHY TO BE KEPT.** You will observe it is not an *ecclesiastical* unity; it is not endeavoring to keep the unity of the *denomination*, the community, the diocese, the parish—no, it is, “Endeavoring to keep *the unity of the Spirit*.” Men speak of the Episcopal Church, the Wesleyan Church, or the Presbyterian Church; now, I hesitate not to say that there is nothing whatever in Scripture at all parallel to such language,

for there I read of the seven churches in Asia, the Church in Corinth, Philippi, Antioch, etc. In England, if I speak according to the Word of God, there are some thousands of churches holding the Episcopal form of government; in Scotland, some thousands of godly churches are ordered according to Presbyterian rule; among the Wesleyans, there are churches adhering to the form of government first carried out by Mr. Wesley. But it is not according to the method of Scripture, but only according to *human invention* to speak of a whole cluster of churches as one church. Although I myself am much inclined to a Presbyterian union among our churches, I cannot but perceive in Holy Scripture that each church is separate, and distinct from every other church. The whole being is connected by those different bonds and ligaments which keep all the separate members together—but not so connected as to run into one another to lose their separateness and individuality. There is nothing in Scripture which says, “Endeavoring to keep up your ecclesiastical arrangements for centralization.” The exhortation runs thus— “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit.”

Again, you will observe it does not say, “Endeavoring to keep the *uniformity* of the Spirit.” The Spirit does not recognize uniformity. The analogy of His work in nature is against it; the flowers are not all tinted with the same hue, nor do they exhale the same odors; there is variety everywhere in the work of God. If I glance at providence, I do not perceive that any two events happen after the same form—the page of history is varied. If, therefore, I look into the Church of God, I do not expect to find that all Christians pronounce the same slogans or see with the same eyes. The same, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,” we rejoice to recognize, but as to uniformity of dress, liturgical verbiage, or form of worship, I find nothing of it in Scripture. Men may pray acceptably

standing, sitting, kneeling, or lying with their faces upon the earth; they may meet with Jesus by the river's side, in the Temple porch, in a prison, or in a private house, and they may be one in the same Spirit, although the one regards a day and the other regards it not. So what is this unity of the Spirit? I trust, dear brethren, that we know it by having it in possession; it is most certain that we cannot keep the unity of the Spirit if we don't already have it! Let us ask ourselves the question, "Have we the unity of the Spirit?" None can have it but those who have the Spirit, and the Spirit dwells only in new-born believing souls. By virtue of his having the Spirit, the believer is in union with every other spiritual man, and *this is the unity which he is to endeavor to keep*. This unity of the Spirit is manifested in *love*. A husband and wife may be, through providence, cast hundreds of miles from one another—but there is a unity of spirit in them because their hearts are one. We, brethren, are divided many thousands of miles from the saints in Australia, America, and the South Seas—but loving as brethren, we feel the unity of the Spirit. I was never a member of a church meeting in the backwoods of America; I never worshipped God with the Samoans, or with my brethren in New Zealand; but notwithstanding all this, I feel the unity of the Spirit in my soul with them, and everything which concerns their spiritual welfare is interesting to me.

This unity of the Spirit is caused by a similarity of *nature*. Find a drop of water glittering in the rainbow, leaping in the waterfall, rippling in the stream, lying silent in the stagnant pool, or dashing in spray against the vessel's side—that water claims kinship with every drop of water the wide world over, because it is the same in its elements; and even so, there is a unity of the Spirit which we cannot imitate which consists in our being "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We bear in us the Holy Spirit as our

daily quickener, and walk in the path of faith in the living God. Here is the unity of spirit, a unity of life working itself out in love; this is sustained daily by the Spirit of God; He who makes us one, keeps us one. Every member of my body must have a communion with every other member of my body; I say *must*. The question never arises, that I know of, between the members of my body whether they will do so or not; as long as there is life in my frame, every separate portion of my body must have communion with every other portion of it. Here is my finger—I may discolor it with some noxious drug; my head may not approve of the staining of my finger—it may suggest a thousand ways by which that finger ought to be put through a purgation, and this may be all right and proper—but my head never says, “I will cut off that finger from communion.” My tongue speaks loudly against the noxious fluid which has done my finger mischief, and has blistered it so as to cause pain to the whole body, yet the head cannot say, “I will have that finger cut off,” unless the body is willing to be forever mutilated and incomplete.

Now, it is not possible to mutilate the body of Christ. Christ does not lose His members or cast off parts of His mystical body, and therefore, it never ought to enter the head of any Christian whether or not he shall have communion in spirit with any other Christian, for *he cannot do without it*—as long as he lives, he *must* have it. This does not stop him in boldly denouncing the error into which his brother may have fallen, or in avoiding his intimate acquaintance while he continues to sin, but it does forbid the thought that we can ever really sever any true believer from Christ, or even from us, if we are in Christ Jesus. The unity of the Spirit is preserved, then, by the Holy Spirit infusing daily life-floods into the one mystical body. And in proportion as the life-floods become stronger, that union becomes more manifest. Let a spirit of prayer be poured

out on all our churches and conventionalities will be dashed down—divisions will be forgotten and locked in each others arms—the people of God will show to the world that they are one in Christ Jesus!

There are some points in which this unity of the Spirit is certain to discover itself. In *prayer*, how truly does Montgomery put it—

“The saints in prayer appear as one  
In word and deed and mind,  
While with the Father and the Son,  
Sweet fellowship they find.”

There is a unity of *praise*, too. Our hymn books differ, after all, very little; we still sing the same songs, and praise the same Savior; this unity will soon discover itself in co-working; they have a union in their conflict with the common foe, and in their contention for the common truth of God. This will lead to communion; I do not mean sitting down to the same table to eat bread, and drink wine—that is only the *outward* union; but I mean that communion which consists in heart beating true to heart, and in the feeling that they are one in Christ Jesus. It was a motto with Bucer, “To love all in whom he could see anything of Christ Jesus.” Be this your motto, brethren in Christ; make not your love an excuse for not offering stern rebuke, but rebuke because you love! Some persons think that unless you smooth your tongue, and cover your words with sugar, no matter though it may be sugar of lead; unless you cringe and compliment and conceal, there is no love in your heart. But I trust it will be our privilege to show in our own persons, some of us, how sternly we can dissent and yet love; how truly be Nonconformists to our brethren’s error, and yet in our very

nonconformity prove our affection to them and to our common Master.

It is said of some men that they appear to have been born upon the mountains of Bether, for they do nothing but cause division, and baptized in the waters of Meribah, for they delight in causing strife. This is not the case with the genuine Christian—he cares only for the truth, for his Master, for the love of souls—and when these things are not imperiled, his own private likes or dislikes never affect him. He loves as much to see another church prosper as his own—so long as he can know that Christ is glorified, it is a matter of comparative indifference to him by what minister God’s arm is made bare, in what place souls are converted, or to what particular form of worship men addict themselves. Yet ever does he hold to this, that there is no unity of the Spirit where there is a lie in the teaching; that where the souls of men are concerned, he would be a traitor to God if he did not bear witness against the error which damns and testify to the truth which saves. And where the crown jewels of his Master’s kingdom are concerned, he dares not traitorously hold his tongue; and though his fellow subjects cast his name out as evil, he counts it all joy as long as he is faithful to his Master, and discharges his conscience as before the Judge of the quick and the dead.

**II. Secondly, THIS UNITY NEEDS KEEPING.** It is a very difficult thing to maintain and that for several reasons. Our *sins* would, very naturally, break it; if we were all angels, we should keep the unity of the Spirit, and not need even the exhortation to do so, but, alas, we are proud and pride is the mother of division! Diotrophes, who loves to have the pre-eminence, is very sure to head a faction. *Envy*, too, how that separates friends! When I cannot be satisfied with anything which is not hammered on my anvil, or run in my mold; when another man’s candle grieves me because it gives more light than mine;



and when another man troubles me because he has more divine grace than I have—oh, there is no unity in this case! *Anger*—what a deadly foe is that to unity! When we cannot take the smallest disrespect; when the slightest thing brings the blood into our face; when we speak unadvisedly with our lips—but surely I need not read the long list of sins which spoil this unity of the Spirit, for they are legion! O, may God cast them out from us, for only so can we keep the unity of the Spirit!

But, beloved, our very virtues may make it difficult for us to keep this unity. Luther is brave and bold, hot and impetuous; he is just the man to lead the army, and clear the way for the Reformation. Calvin is logical, clear, cool, precise—he seldom speaks rashly. It is not in the order of things that Luther and Calvin should always agree; their very virtues cause them to fall out, and consequently, Luther, in a bad temper, calls Calvin a pig and a devil! And, albeit, Calvin once replied, “Luther may call me what he will, but I will always call him a dear servant of Christ.” Yet John Calvin knew how to pierce Luther under the fifth rib when he was in humor. In those days, the courtesies of Christians to one another were generally of the iron-gauntlet order, rather than the naked hand; all were so much called to war for the sake of the truth of God that even their fellow soldiers were treated with suspicion. And it may be with us that the very watchfulness of truth, which is so valuable, may make us suspect where there is no need for suspicion, and our courage may take us as sometimes a fiery horse has carried a young warrior beyond where he intended to have ridden—where he may be taken prisoner to his own damage. We must watch—the best of us must watch, lest we fight the Lord’s battles with Satan’s weapons, and so, even from love to God and His truth, violate the unity of the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit ought to be kept, dear friends, because Satan is so busy to mar it; he knows that the greatest glory of Christ will spring

from the unity of His Church. “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.”

There is no church happiness where there is not church unity. Let a church be disaffected and divided, the schism in the body is death to all hallowed fellowship. We cannot enjoy communion with each other unless our hearts are one! Our work for God—how feebly it is done when we are not agreed! The enemy cannot desire a better ally than strife in the midst of our camp. “Can you not agree,” said a warrior of old, “when your enemy is in sight?” Christians, can you not agree to keep the unity of the Spirit when a destroying Satan is always on the watch seeking to drag immortal souls down to hell? We must be more diligent in this matter! We must seek to purge out from ourselves everything which would divide, and to have in our hearts every holy thought which would tend to unite us with our brethren. I am not, when I join a Christian Church, to say, “I am quite certain I shall never break its unity.” I am to suspect myself of a liability to that evil, and I am to watch with all diligence that I keep the unity of the Spirit.

**III.** In the third place, in order to the keeping of this, **THERE IS A BOND PROVIDED, THE BOND OF PEACE.** Beloved, there should be much peace, perfect peace, unbounded peace, between the people of God. We are not aliens. We are “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Realize your fellow citizenship! Treat not Christian people as foreigners, and this bond of fellow citizenship will be one bond of peace. You are not enemies; men may be fellow citizens, and yet hate one another, but you are *friends*, you are all friends to Christ, and in Him you are all friends to one another. Let that be another bond. But you go farther—you are not mere friends, you are brethren born of the same parent—filled with the same life. And shall not this be a

bond? See that you fall not out by the way; strive not one with another, for you are brethren. This is not all, you are closer than this—you are members of the same body! Shall this mysterious union fail to be a bond of peace to you? Will you, being the foot, contend with the eye? Or will you, being the eye, contend with the hand, and say, “I have no need of you”? If it is, indeed, the truth of God, and not a fiction that we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—because the joints and bones in other men’s bodies may not agree—let it never be said of the mystical body of our blessed Lord that there was such a monstrous thing in it! Let it never be said that the various parts would not co-work, but fell to battling with another! I believe I have brought out the meaning of the text. There is a unity of the Spirit which is worthy to be kept—we ought to keep it—we must try to keep it in the bond of peace.

To come to the practical conclusion of the subject; first, in the connection of one church with another, and secondly, in the connection of one church member with another, it is not a desirable thing that all churches should melt into one another and become one. The complete fusion of all churches into one ecclesiastical corporation would inevitably produce another form of Popery, since history teaches us that large ecclesiastical bodies grow more or less corrupt as a matter of course. Huge spiritual corporations are, as a whole, the strongholds of tyranny, and the refuges of abuse, and it is only a matter of time when they shall break to pieces! Disruption and secession must occur, and will occur where a unity is attempted which is not meant in God’s Word; but it will be a blessed thing when all the churches walk together in the unity of the Spirit!

This church, although it has been baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, and laments the neglect of that ordinance by others, yet feels that the unity of the Spirit is not to be broken, and holds out its right hand to all who love our Lord Jesus

Christ in sincerity. When yonder church, governed by its elders, feels a unity with another church which is presided over by its bishop; when a certain church, which holds with mutual edification and no ministry, is yet not quarrelsome towards those who love the ministry of the Word; when, in fact, we have agreed in this one thing—that we will search the Word independently, and act out according to our light what we find to be true—but having so done we will keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, I say this is most desirable, and this, it is, that we are to seek after—not the fusion of all into one denomination—but the keeping of each church in its own distinct independent testimony in love with every other church that is doing the same.

Now, in order to this, I have a few suggestions to offer. It is quite certain we shall never keep the unity of the Spirit if this church shall declare that it is superior to every other! If there is a church which says, “We are *the* church, and all others are mere sects; we are established, and others are only tolerated,” then, it is a troubler in Israel and must hide its head when the unity of the Spirit is so much as hinted at! Any church which lifts up its head on high, and boasts over other churches, has violated the unity of the Spirit. If other churches reply, “One is our Master, and all we are brethren,” they do not violate the unity of the Spirit, for they simply claim their rights, and speak the truth of God. That other church which forgets its true position as one in the family, and begins to set itself up as mistress, and claim preeminence over its fellow servants, has put it out of its own power to keep the unity of the Spirit, for it has violated it once and for all. A church that would keep the unity of the Spirit, again, must not consider itself to be so infallible that not to belong to its membership is sin. What right has any one church to set itself up as the standard, so that those who do not join it are necessarily dissenters?

It is true my Episcopal brother is a Dissenter—he dissents from *me*! It is true he is a Nonconformist, for he does not conform to *me*! I would not, however, call him by such names, lest I should claim to my own church to be the one true church, and so should break the unity of the Spirit. If I turn to history, I may believe that my church can claim a long line of ancestors descending from the apostles, without ever running through the Church of Rome. But shall I, therefore, call a brother who does not quite see this succession, a schismatic, and denominate his assembly illegal? If he is a schismatic because he does not come to *my* place, why am I not a schismatic because I do not go to *his*? Well, but he divides the church; he ought to come and worship with me! Ought I not to go and worship with him? Ah, but we are the larger number! Are divine things to be ruled by the majority? Where would the Church of God be any day if it came to polling? I am afraid the devil would always be at the head of the poll. We wish to keep the unity of the Spirit, and if we have a little sister, we will treat her all the more kindly, owing to the fewness of her members.

If I want to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” I must never call in the magistrate to force my brother to pay for washing my surplice, ringing my bell, and winding up my clock. I must not tell my brother that he is bound to pay for the support of my worship. “Oh,” he says, “my dear friend, I pay for the maintenance of the worship which I believe to be correct, and I am quite willing that you should do the same for yours.” I would voluntarily assist you if you were poor, but you tell me you will put me in prison if I do not pay, and yet tell me to keep the unity of the Spirit? My dear friend, it is not keeping the unity of the Spirit to take away my stool, and my table, and my candlestick, and say you will put me in “limbo,” or haul me before an ecclesiastical court! Yes, among the rest it hopes that you will give up your sin in this matter. If we should stand

possessed of a piece of ground where we bury our dead, and if there should happen to come a member of another Christian Church who would wish to lay his poor dead baby in our ground, there being no other convenient spot anywhere, and he asks the favor, I think we can hardly be thought to keep the unity of the Spirit if we tell him, “No, nothing of the kind! You had your child sprinkled, therefore, it cannot be buried with us Christians! We will not have your sprinkled baby lying alongside our baptized dead.” I do not think that is keeping the unity of the Spirit, and I do not think when some churches have turned from their graveyard gate the mourners who have brought an unbaptized infant—and the mourners have gone back weeping to their homes—I do not think such churches have been endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Again, if churches are to agree one with another, they must not make rules that ministers who are not of their own denomination shall not occupy their pulpits. I should be ashamed of you, if you passed a resolution that no one dissenting from us should stand in my pulpit. But we know a church which says, “No matter how good a man may be; he may be a man as venerated as John Angell James, or he may have all the excellencies of a William Jay—we would not, perhaps, mind hearing him in a Town Hall— but into the sacredness of our particular rostrum, these interlopers must not intrude.” For, says this church, “Ours are ministers, yours are only lay teachers. Ours are sacraments—the cup of blessing which we bless is the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is the body of Christ—you have no sacramental efficacy with you. In fact, you are not a church, but only a body of schismatics meeting together to carry out what you think to be right. We tolerate you, but that is all we can do.” Where is the unity of the Spirit there? My dear friends, I received this text

from one of the most holy men in the Church of England—if I expound it slightly for her benefit, he will, I trust, excuse me, for I do so in all honesty, desiring to aid him and many others in revision and reform. If this church were in the same condition as the Church of England, I would pray to be as plain in my remarks. I say it is an anachronism! It is a thing out of date for the 19th century for any one church in this land, and that church the only one which defiles her hand by taking state pay, to stand up and say, “We are *the* Church! Our ministers are *the* ministers! Our people are *the* people! And now, dear brethren, shake hands and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit of God.”

Why, it is preposterous! Let us meet on equal ground; let us lay aside all pretenses to superiority; let us really aid, and not oppress each other! Let us mingle in prayer; let us unite in confession of sin; let us join heartily in reforming our errors, and a true evangelical alliance will cover our land! If any church will take the Bible as its standard, and in the power of the Spirit of God, preach the name of Jesus, there are thousands of us who will rejoice to give the right hand of fellowship with a hearty greeting to all such! We are striving every day to get other churches, and ourselves, more and more into that condition in which, while holding our own, we can yet keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!

Now, a few words to you in regard to your relationship to one another as members of the same church. If we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in the same church, then, we must avoid everything that would mar it. Gossip—gossip is a very ready means of separating friends from one another; let us endeavor to talk of something better than each other's characters. Dionysius went down to the Academy to Plato; Plato asked what he came for, “Why,” said Dionysius, “I thought that you, Plato, would be talking

against me to your students.” Plato made this answer—“Do you think, Dionysius, we are so destitute of matter to converse upon, that we talk of you?” Truly, we must be very short of subjects when we begin to talk of one another! It is far better that we magnify Christ than detract from the honor of His members; we must lay aside all envy. Multitudes of good people liked the Reformation, but they said they did not like the idea of its being done by a poor miserable monk like Martin Luther; and so there are many who like to see good things done, and good works carried on, but do not care to see it done by that upstart young brother, or that poor man, or that woman who has no particular rank or state.

As a church, let us shake off envy! Let us all rejoice in God’s light, and as for pride—if any of you have grown vainglorious of late, shake it off. I hope to exercise a ministry in this place which will drive out those of you who will not acknowledge your brethren when they are poorer or of less education than yourselves. What if the man does mar the Queen’s English when he talks—what does that matter, as long as his heart is right? As long as you can feel he loves the Master, surely you can put up with his faults of language—if he can put up with your faults of action. Then, let us cultivate everything that would tend to unity. Are any sick? Let us care for them. Are any suffering? Let us weep with them. Do we know one who has less love than others? Then, let us have more, so as to make up the deficiency. Do we perceive faults in a brother? Let us admonish him in love and affection. I pray you, be peacemakers, every one of you! Let this church go on as it has done for the last 11 years in holy harmony and blessed unity. Let us remember that we cannot keep the unity of the Spirit unless we all believe the truth of God; let us search our Bibles, therefore, and conform our views and sentiments to the teaching of God’s Word.



I have already told you that unity in error is unity in ruin; we need unity in the truth of God through the Spirit of God. This let us seek after! Let us live near to Christ, for this is the best way of promoting unity. Divisions in churches never begin with those full of love to the Savior. Cold hearts, unholy lives, inconsistent actions, neglected closets—these are the seeds which sow schisms in the body! But he who lives near to Jesus—wears His likeness and copies His example—will be, wherever he goes, a sacred bond, a holy link to bind the Church together more closely than ever.

May God give us this, and from now on, let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I commend the text to all believers to be practiced through the coming year; and to those who are not believers, what can I say, but that I trust their unity and their peace may be broken forever, and that they may be led to Christ Jesus to find peace in His death! May faith be given, and then love and every divine grace will follow, so that they may be one with us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

# **608 A DISCOURSE FOR A REVIVAL SEASON – JER. 8:19-20**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 8th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” —  
Jeremiah 8:19-20**

THESE WORDS, as they stand in the Book of Jeremiah, were probably meant to set forth the sin of Israel. The prophet’s heart is very full of sadness; he can hear the shrieks and cries of the people in the streets of Jerusalem; they are moaning for sorrow because of the oppression of the Chaldeans—the nation that dwelt afar off. And in the midst of their bitterness and woe, they remember the God whom they had forgotten in their prosperity; but this remembrance is not a gracious one; they do not remember Him to humble themselves before Him, but to bring accusations against Him! They inquire, “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” As if they felt, “The people of the Lord, the people of the Lord are we, and therefore He is bound to send us deliverance.” They question the faithfulness of Jehovah because He justly allows them to be downtrodden for their sins; then the Lord,

speaking by the prophet, tells them the reason why, although present among them, He did not help them—"Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?" If they believed Him to be present, why did they set up false gods? If they considered Him to be their God, why did they turn aside to the vanities of the heathen? His presence among them had been the occasion of greater provocation, since they had mocked Him to His face, and set up idols in His own temple! In the 20th verse, the prophet represents the people as breaking forth into another sorrowful and lamentable cry, "We thought that God would help us in the days of harvest, but the harvest is past; we dreamed that He would chase away our enemies when the summer months had come, but the summer is ended, and still Chaldea has her foot upon Judea's neck—we still drink the wormwood, and the gall, and our enemies open their mouths at us—the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

We find in the New Testament that sometimes the apostles used the language of the prophets in other than the original sense. Finding the prophetic words to be expressive of a sense which they themselves wished to convey to the people, they did as it were, take the horses and chariot of the prophet, and drive them in another direction. So I intend to do this morning. It strikes me that there is no text in Scripture more applicable to our present condition than this. "Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country." We have been crying, and pleading with God for the multitude of far-off sinners who know nothing of Him; we will begin, therefore, by *dwelling upon the cry*. Then comes *a question*, a question requiring much earnest thought at present—"Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?" Then we have *another question* which may cause searching of heart among both saints and sinners—"Why have they provoked Me to anger with their

graven images, and with strange vanities?” And our text concludes with *another cry*, not the cry of gracious souls for others, but the cry of graceless sinners for themselves, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

I. At the outset we have in the text, **A CRY**.

Observe the word, “*Behold*.” I have told you many times that wherever the word, “Behold,” occurs in Scripture, it is a sort of signpost to show that there is good entertainment within. God puts this “N.B.” in the margin, that we may observe well, what it is that He is saying to us. The, “Behold,” here is the mark of astonishment. We are to “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people” as an unusual thing. So seldom does Israel cry unto the Lord—she is so negligent of prayer, she is so silent when she ought to be incessant in her petitions—that when at last she does cry, her voice is amazement in God’s ears! I have felt this week in the state of mind which is indicated by that interjection, “Behold!” When I sat on this platform on Monday night, and marked your sobs and tears, and heard the suppressed sighs and groans of the great multitude then assembled, I could not but say, “Behold!” And yet it ought not to be a wonder; it ought not to be a strange thing for God’s people to be in earnest, or for sinners to feel brokenness of heart! If prayer is the Christian’s breath, why then, to see a multitude breathing should never be a spectacle! If to pray unto God is the Christian’s daily privilege, then to approach the throne of God with prevalent earnestness should never be looked upon with astonishment! Yet, brethren, we must frankly confess that it is so. True prayer is an astonishing thing; prevalent intercession is an amazing thing—and if you want to see something that will really thrill you with a holy wonder, attend a prayer meeting where the Holy Spirit is present in the fullness of His power, and where the brethren

pray not as a mere matter of form, but as if filled with all the fullness of God!

Such meetings as we have had during the past week are things to marvel at! *Behold!* It has become a wonder for God's people to really cry! Ah, there are some of you to whom weeping over sinners would be a novelty; to some of you professors, *agonizing* for souls would be a new thing. You pray for sinners in your usual prayers; but you do not know what it is to travail in birth for souls; you never feel as if your hearts would break if souls are not saved; you do not feel the burden of the Lord laid upon you till you are crushed in the dust, and made to groan out, "God have mercy upon these poor perishing souls." With some of you, it would be a great wonder to be really on fire in prayer, and if we heard you cry, we would be compelled to say, "Behold the voice of the cry of My people." Notice how this prayer is described. It is, *a cry*—"Behold the cry." A cry is the most natural form of utterance; it is a natural expression made up of pain, and desire for relief. A cry is the first sign of human life—as if to indicate that we are most alive when most we cry; as if a cry were the way to life, and the path to higher life ever afterwards. A cry; there is something cutting and piercing in it; it cleaves its way up to the throne of God. A *spiritual* cry! It is born in the heart, down deep in the inner recesses of regenerate nature; it is not a mere lip-worship, it is not a thing of the tongue and of the jaw. A cry! It comes from the very soul, and therefore it reaches to God's ear and God's heart. A cry! It is a plaintive, bitter, painful thing—and mark you—God's people seldom get a blessing in the conversion of souls till their prayer turns into a cry mingled with weeping; and if there is sobbing and groaning, it is none the worse. Do you know, dear friends, the difference between the prayers which are not cries, and those which are?

When a brother merely prays what we call *prayer*, he stands up and utters very proper words, very edifying, very suitable, no doubt, and then he is done. Another brother comes forward—he wants a blessing—he tells the Lord what he desires; he takes the promises; he wrestles with God, and then he seems to say, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” He cannot be satisfied till, with the cry of, “Abba, Father,” he has come before the throne of God, and really obtained an audience with the Most High. Note again, for every word of our text is suggestive, it is, “Behold the *voice* of the cry of the daughter of My people.” It is not enough to be earnest; you must *know* what you are earnest about! The cry must have a voice which is as far as possible understood by yourself, and a voice which has a meaning in it before God. I am afraid there have been some meetings against which the charge of fanaticism might be very fairly brought, because, while there was an admirable earnestness, which it were well for colder Christians to copy, there was a lack of understanding—a *need of really knowing what they wanted*. Beloved, we must be clear when we come before God that we really are *asking for something*; our soul must prepare itself by meditation upon its own needs, and upon the needs of the people to express an intelligent desire before God.

Cry! Cry aloud as much as you will! But remember, when the voice said cry, the prophet said, “What shall I cry?” And so when I come before God in prayer, I must ask Him, “What shall I cry?” And I must get a clear sense of what it is at which I am driving, for if an archer takes no aim, he may pull his bow with all his might, but he certainly is not likely to succeed. I must direct my prayer unto God as David says—pull my bow, direct the arrow, take aim at the center of the target—and then, when the arrow flies, it is likely to reach its place. “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You and will look up.”

What a mercy it is that our cries have a voice with God! Why sometimes, when our cries have no voice for us, they have a voice with God. “The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” When my desires are such that there are no words in any human language which could possibly express them, my heart does but let fall a tear, or lift a glance to heaven, and there is a voice in my cry. “Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning,” said a poor man in an earnest prayer, to which I remember to have once listened—“I cannot tell You, Lord, what I want, but take the meaning, take the meaning of my poor stammering words.”

There is a voice in our prayers as a church, and I think it is, “Father, have mercy upon souls! Father, arise, and let Your kingdom come, and let the name of Your Son Jesus be honored in the hearts of many! Father, let the Spirit who dwells in His Church now work mightily, and get to Your name great renown in the midst of the dense crowd among whom we dwell.” O God, this is the voice of the cry of Your people! Further, study *the matter* of the voice—it was, “*for them who dwell in a far country.*” In what a far country does every sinner dwell! “He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” The sinner who is nearest to God is still in a far country; you moralists, how far off you are from God. Dear Mr. Offord said the other night, “Can any of you tell how far off God is from the unpardoned sinner? Remember, you are on this side of sin, and God is on the other side of it— but can anyone tell how far God is from the other side of sin? His pure and holy eyes cannot even look on it; then how far must He be from it. You are just as far off from God, as God is from sin added to the breadth and length of sin itself. See your sin towering like a stupendous Alp; you cannot cross that barrier, and God is far away on the other side of that mountain; this is your wretched position afar off from God.”

Now, I hope the prayers of God's people have been going up for all the far-off ones, that infinite mercy would make them near by the blood of Christ. There are certain special far-off ones whom we ought to mention in our prayers, and whom we ought to labor after in our Christian efforts. Do not forget the harlot when you pray—illustrious trophies of divine grace have been snatched from the kennel and the pavement; do not forget the poorest of the poor, the vilest of the vile—and those who dwell in haunts where theft, ignorance, and crime fester; pray for these most; they most need your entreaties—and let your prayer be a cry—a cry like that of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem. It would be one of the healthiest things in the world for you Christian people, if you were to spend a day with city missionaries and Bible women in the very worst of our back slums. If your cry did not come up, then, for those who dwell in a far country, I despair of your knowing what true religion means! The fact is, we do not face the sin of London; we, like the ostrich, bury our heads, and shut our eyes so as to avoid seeing the evil. We can so easily get to our places of worship along the front streets in which there is a fringe of respectability, and order, and so on, that we forget the dark lanes, the blind alleys, the dingy courts, the places where poverty, suffering, sin, and ignorance abound.

O dear friends, if we do not go further, if we do not think of foreign lands, we still have reason enough for putting up the voice of our cry for those who are, “in a far country,” and yet dwell at home in England. Still, I must have you remember another word in the text—for, “those *who dwell* in a far country”—there are some of you who make a long abode in a far country. You were afar off from God 11 years ago; I preached at you then. You were afar off from God five or six years ago, when revivals were frequent; when this Tabernacle was opened, you came here, and took your seat, and you were



afar off from God then—and you are afar off now. The fact is, you have taken up your dwellings—you have made a settlement in one of the parishes of the City of Destruction! You are making out a claim to be enrolled in the devil's register; you dwell in the far-off land. If you were uneasy, and felt yourselves to be strangers and foreigners in the land of destruction, how would I clap my hands for joy, for you would soon be rid of your old master if you once felt sick of him. But no, you dwell in that country, and I suppose, some of you always will, till you are taken from it to make your lodging place in the flames of hell forever! O, may God prevent it! But I fear it of some of you.

There are some who listen to my words who are made to feel under them. I heard but the other day of one who was set a trembling, and shivering under the gospel; he could not but come and hear though it was always like a great hammer to him. His friends and companions, by much persevering effort, laughed him out of coming here; they could not bear that he should come to hear the despised preacher; though he had been a dreadful drunkard and swearer before, and was then sober, yet they preferred his drunkenness to his coming here! Bitterly have they had to regret it—for he went back to his sins, and became as gross a sinner as before. And then when he was killing himself with sin, they began to wish him to come here again—but it was too late—he would not come again. Perhaps he dared not. A dreadful remorse settled upon him, and under its influence he put an end to his own existence. Take care, any of you who hate the gospel that you do not laugh at other men's convictions. And when the gospel does come home with power to any, do not be the devil's advocate, and stand up and plead against God. God forgive those who do this, and may none of us be guilty of it! But oh, you dwell in this far country, some of you; you are in a state of danger and condemnation.

It was only the other night, when we met at St. John's Wood that a man came into the vestry made broken-hearted through the address of the evening. My dear brother Stott soon had him on his knees, and began to pray with him. And to my grief, this man said he used to hear me at Exeter Hall, and was much better in his outward life. While hearing me he thought of religion, and lived soberly—but the Tabernacle was too far for him to come to, and he would not go anywhere else—and therefore he went back to the world, and what seemed to be like a work of divine grace, proved to be only a work of nature. Let us be anxious concerning those who dwell in the far country, and are only for a time, as it were, taken out as on an excursion into the land of light. They still have their parish settlement in the far country, and are numbered among the citizens of the City of Destruction, and are not among the people of God. O, for a cry this morning, another cry from God's people for those who dwell in a far country!

One very consoling thought is in the text. I must only hint at it. The cry is, *"The cry of the daughter of My people."* O beloved, it is so sweet to think that our prayers, poor as they are, are the prayers of God's own people, and therefore they must be heard. You will say, "Is that a right argument?" Oh, yes it is! "If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children"; remember that is how Christ puts it. You are the Lord's children, therefore He will hear you. If you were strangers it might be a different thing; our prayers might very readily be pulled to pieces by critics, but our Father will not criticize them because they are the cries of His own children! I do not think we set such store by believer's prayers as we ought to do. Would you let your child constantly cry to you, and not answer him? I know you would not. Put it differently—would you let your brother in Christ plead with you, and not grant him his desire if you could grant it? You have not a Christian's heart if

you would. Or I will touch you more closely. We love our wives—if your wife should ask for anything that would be for her good, and you could give it, would you refuse it? Husband, would you refuse it? You are no husband if you did! Look at Christ, the Husband of the Church—do you think He will refuse the cry of His own spouse? What? Shall His own dear bride come before Him and embrace His feet, and say, “I will not let You go except You bless me”—and shall He who has espoused her unto Himself in faithfulness, say to her, “I have bid you seek Me, but I will not be found of you; I have commanded you to knock, but the door shall not be opened; I have told you to ask, but you shall not receive”? O, slander not my loving Lord like this—

“He feels at His heart all our sighs and our groans,  
For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones.”

Let us rejoice together in the spirit of prayer which God has given us. Let us try to foster it; let us be much in the exercise of it. During the coming week let us still continue to meet together to intercede at the throne of grace. And this is my reason for urging it upon you—God has promised that when we cry, He will hear us—“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” “Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.” “With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

**II.** We will now turn to the **QUESTION**—“Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?”

I will answer that question at once in the affirmative. “The Lord *is* in Zion; her King is in the midst of her.” Having answered this question, it suggests many more. Let me put them to you. If the Lord is, indeed, in Zion and the King is in the midst of her, *why do we pray as if He were not?* I find no fault

with the prayers of my brothers and sisters when they ask for an outpouring of the Spirit—what they mean by their prayers is a very proper thing, but I am not certain that the expression is altogether the best that might be used. The Spirit of God is with His people. I could not, last Monday night, ask to have the Spirit of God poured out, for *He was there*. If at any time the Holy Spirit was with any men on earth, even at Pentecost, He was here last Monday night, as those present must have felt. We had not so much to ask for it as to be *thankful* for it. When two or three of you meet together in Christ's name, do not meet unbelievably. Remember that He has said, "There am I in the midst of you." Be content with that assurance; you have not, as it were, to mount up to heaven, that is, to bring Christ *down*—nor to descend into the earth, that is, to bring Him *up* from the depths—He is with you! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" "God dwells in you." The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as a perpetual and abiding Comforter. And in the Church, the Spirit of God always dwells. Do not pray, therefore, dear friends, as if God were not with you. "Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?" Do not pray, therefore, like the priests of Baal, as though your God were on a journey or needed to be awakened out of sleep. He is with you, ready to answer by fire, if, like Elijah, you have but faith with which to challenge His promise and His power.

Is the Lord with you? Then in the next place, let me ask you this question. *Why do you despond because of your own weakness?* "We have not a sufficient number of ministers; we have little wealth; we have few places of public worship; we have few gifted members," and so on: so some unbelievably talk. "Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?" What more do you need? "Oh, we would like to be strong." Why would you be strong? That you must be disqualified to be used by God? "No,"

you say. Well, but you would be! What did the Lord say by the mouth of His servant Gideon? “The people are too many for Me.” I never heard that the Lord said, “The people are too few”—never! “The people are too many.” If Samson had the choice of weapons with which to rout his enemies—if he wished to do it in such a way as to make the feat illustrious, if there were before him a cannon, a fifty-pounder and the jawbone of an ass—which would he take? Why, any fool can kill the enemy with cannon, but it takes a Samson to smite them with the jawbone of an ass! And so, when God has the choice of weapons, and He always has, He chooses the weaker weapon, that He may get for Himself the greater renown. My brethren, glory in your infirmities—thank God for your weaknesses! There is room for God when you are empty! But when you are so full, and so strong, and have such excellent machinery, and can do the work so well, why then you will attempt to do without your God, and a failure will be the result. But, O beloved—

“When I am weak, then am I strong,  
Grace is my shield, and Christ my song.”

Let this silence forever all your raving about weakness in Christian duty! “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” Did I hear you say, “I am a feeble woman, and I have too much work to do for God. I had better, perhaps, curtail it, or give it up”? My sister, now that you are weaker, try to do more, for now there is more room for your God. “Oh, I am a trembling, humble, unknown man with but little talent, and what I have done has been about as much as I can do—I am afraid to venture more.” My brother, venture more! Get onto the ground of, “I cannot, but *God can*.” That is safe ground! “I can,” is like the ice on which the boy tries to slide, and it

swallows him up. “I cannot, but God can,” is terra firma—stand there and you stand safely. There can never come a shock to the man who rests on the eternal Rock—God all-sufficient. Rest on that and be glad.

Again, this question provokes another one. If God is with us, *why these great fears about the prosperity of the Church?* “Dr. Colenso becomes an Infidel. Stanley becomes something very suspicious. Multitudes of ministers, so called, become Puseyites—what will become of the Church of Christ?” What will become of her? She will nestle where she always did nestle—beneath the eternal wings! And the more she gets rid of all her carnal confidences the better for her! “Oh what will become of true religion?” Beloved, what will become of true religion? It will go on winning and conquering, and with Christ upon the white horse of victory, riding in her forefront, the truth of God shall march on conquering and to conquer, till He shall come whose right it is to reign! Be not discouraged, for “Is not her King in her?”

Every now and then, when we try a new scheme, certain prudent brethren come and pull our ears a bit, and they say, “It is more than you can do; you must be prudent.” Yes, we are prudent; we claim to be prudent; we claim to have the highest prudence; for we reckon it always prudent to believe God, and always prudent to act upon God’s promise, and not according to carnal policy, nor the judgments of our proud, self-conceited, ignorant flesh. Brethren, if the King is in the midst of her, *let us go on and conquer!* You think you will never see such days as Pentecost? Why not? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” You fear you will never see such wonders as were worked by Whitefield and Wesley? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” You fancy that Ireland will never receive the gospel? You think that heathen nations will never lay aside their idolatry? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the

midst of her?” You conceive that this is not the age of miracles, and you condemn us to go on in the everlasting jog-trot of propriety, in the do-nothing style of prescription, keeping in the perpetual cart-rut of conventionality, and never daring to blaze out a path for ourselves? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” You do not believe there will be a thousand souls converted under one sermon? You do not think it is likely that the Church will be increased by hundreds in a day, or in a month? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?”

Dear brethren, the God of Zion is here! The King of Zion is here! I grant you, we do not sufficiently recognize His presence. We are not, as we should be, obedient to His commands; but I charge you, O you soldiers of the cross, believe in the presence of your Captain, and press where you see His helmet amidst the din of war! His cross is the great emblazoned banner which leads you on to glory; press forward to suffer, to deny yourselves, to bear witness for Christ—the battle is the Lord’s, and the King Himself fights in the van. “Her King is in the midst of her.” I want to see you trying deeds of daring! Noble deeds of consecration, generous gifts of liberality! I want you to be more earnest in prayer, more incessant in supplication, but, at the same time, more venturesome in your actions, more daring in your devotedness to Christ. The King is in the midst of her! The Lord is in Zion still!

Sinner, I must leave this point, but there is one word of encouragement for you—

“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,  
He receives poor sinners still.”

He is in Zion, not on Sinai. Come to Him, just as you are, come to Him, for He is ready to accept you. The King with the silver scepter in His hand holds it out to every broken-hearted sinner. Come and touch it—He will give you perfect pardon in an instant, if your soul does but touch the silver scepter of His grace presented to you in Christ Jesus!

**III.** Time, however, will not stop for me, and therefore let us go on to the third point. That is, **ANOTHER QUESTION.** “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” Here is *a question for the Lord’s people.*

It becomes a very solemn thing when God is in His Church how that Church behaves herself. Suppose that Church to set up false principles—if her King were not there she might take the kings of the earth to be her head. But dare she do that when her King Himself is there? She might begin to lean upon the civil arm if her God were not in her! But if her God is in her—will she venture to do that in the face of the presence of God? Will she build up with untempered mortar the walls of human confidence, and rest upon an arm of flesh when Jehovah is looking on? In the matter of gospel ordinances it is a very important thing that we keep these ordinances as they were delivered. If the King were not in Zion it would not matter whether I practiced believers’ baptism or unbelievers’ baptism! But if He has commanded believers’ baptism how *dare* I baptize unbelievers in the presence of the King in Zion? How dare I profane His own ordinance to what it was never intended? It therefore becomes a solemn question. If the King is in Zion, I must mind what doctrines I preach; the King is there to hear me; God is there to observe me.

If God is in Zion, again, we must take care no wrong principles are let in. What? Shall I allow the King’s enemies to eat and drink before the King’s own throne? Shall I wait upon



the King's foes, and treat them as my friends when He is looking upon me with eyes of love? Let me take heed lest I prove a hypocrite, and receive anger instead of love! Certainly He will look upon my sins with increased wrath if I indulge them in His presence. Is God in Zion? Beloved Christian brethren, how dare you set up that idol in your heart? Is it your child? Is it your spouse? What is it? Can you worship idols when the King is in Zion—when God is in the midst of her? My dear friend, how can you be so worldly, so money-grasping? How is it that you can make wealth the main objective of your life when the King is in Zion? If He did not know about your worldliness; if He did not know about your coldness of heart; if He did not mark your inconsistency—if He could not see you in the path of sin—then I might not plead with you! But, O Christian men and women, when God is present, how careful should we be! And *He is* present in His Church! Judas, where are you this morning? The Lord Jehovah is here in Zion! He has come to search Jerusalem with candles, and to punish the men who are settled upon their lees! What will He do with you? You think it a good thing to have God in Zion, but you have desired in this, as far as you are concerned, a day of darkness, and not of light—for when He comes, He shall be as a consuming fire, and as fullers' soap! The Lord's special presence in His Church always involves a season of purification.

A church may go on with dead members for 20 years, but when the Lord comes, as soon as the wind sweeps through the forest, the dead branches crack and fall from the tree. A visitation from God to this Church will try you—it is *all* a blessing, but partly a trial. I believe that in every society and every church where the presence of God comes, instead of the dead calm which they formerly enjoyed, there usually comes some outbreak on the part of the flesh against the powers of the Spirit. And they are discovered to be hypocrites who

otherwise might have gone on the whole of their lives with their vain profession—boasting in what they did not possess. Well, we must prepare for this ordeal. If God is in Zion, let us not provoke Him to anger with our idolatry, nor with our strange vanities. Let us purge and humble ourselves before Him!

But this text has a particular voice *to sinners*. I want you to listen to me, you who are unconverted, while I just read this text slowly. You have been saying, “God is in the midst of His people—how is it I have not had a blessing?” I will ask you this question, “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” I will turn that inquiry into English—it is in Hebrew now—“Why have you provoked Me to anger with your drunkenness and with your mixing with vain companions? Do not ask why I have not called you by My divine grace—do not ask why you are not among the people of God. Answer My question—Why have you provoked Me to anger by indulging the lusts of the flesh—by leaving the paths of chastity and virtue—when you knew the right and chose the wrong? Do not ask why the Word is not blessed to you! Do not ask why you do not enjoy the prayer meeting—answer My question first. Why have you provoked Me to anger with your tricks in trade, with your Sabbath-breaking, with your lying, with your loose songs, with your mixing up with worldly company, with your profanity? Do not ask Me why the holy dew has not dropped on you! Do not ask Me why the Holy Spirit has not come to quicken you, but answer this, ‘Why have you provoked Me to anger with your sins?’”

Why, some of you have provoked God to anger these 20 or 30 years! I hear of you every now and then. You love me, I know you do, and you dare not leave my ministry; you cannot leave it though it is often a heart-searching ministry to you. God make it more so! But every now and then there comes an

outbreak with you undecided ones; you must have the drink again, or you must go forth to lechery or sin. So it is with you—you would be saved, but you must be damned! You would have Christ, but you must have your sins! You would like to go to heaven, but you want to taste the sweets of damnation's dainties on the road! How is it you will be such fools as to keep your filthy idols? My God, take the hammer and break their idols! O my God, be the great Iconoclast, and dash down the altars of their lusts, and clear a temple for Yourself! You say, "Amen," to that—I hope you do—then God hear your cry this morning! Through the eternal Savior who drove the buyers and the sellers out of the temple with a scourge of small cords, and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them who sold doves and said, "Take these things away"—this day may He come into your heart and overturn your sins! And may He say, "Take these things away—I have bought that man with blood! I have loved him with an everlasting love! I have brought him under the sound of the ministry! I purpose to bring him to Myself! I have ordained him to wear a crown, and wave a palm, and be wrapped about with the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints! He shall be Mine when I make up My jewels. Out with you, intruders! Away, you devils! Away, you lusts! You may be called Legion, but I, Jehovah-Jesus, cast you out, for this man is Mine."

Lord, do it! Do it this morning! The voice of the cry of Your people comes up for those who are afar off, that their vanities may be given up, and their sins may be dashed in pieces, that they may be Yours forever and ever.

**IV.** The last point is, **ANOTHER CRY.** I wish I might hear this cry this morning, for then I should not hear it in the world to come, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.*"

I have been talking to you, now I want you to talk for yourselves in your heart to God. There came a harvest of souls

to this church, by His grace, from the very day when first we began to preach the gospel here, and we have gathered such numbers into the church as probably never were received into any one church in Europe in any age at one time except in the days of the apostles. That harvest is only past so far as the blessing which we have received *has* been received—for the harvest still continues in all its fullness. But, ah, the harvest has missed *you*! Some of you have had to move away, or the word ceases to be a blessing to you as it once was. This voice has grown stale to you, has no trumpet-ringing clang about it as it once had—“The harvest is past.” Very blessed times have passed over this Church. We have had a summer—oh, what divine warmth has been felt! The sun has shone strong in upon us, and every plant has breathed forth its perfume—every plant that the Lord has planted. But many a Monday night—many a prayer meeting night has gone—the summer has ended and you are not saved! *You are not saved!* Do you remember, some of you, that sermon in the Music Hall, from the text, “Compel them to come in”? [Sermon #227] Then we had a harvest, and then we had a summer—but *you* were not compelled to come in. You were not saved! You remember some Monday nights when we have been bowed down and broken in heart before God in prayer? We have then had harvests and summers—but *you* are not saved! And now, last Monday night what a visitation we had! What a harvest! What a summer! *But you are not saved!*

I wish you would put up that cry, “Now, Lord, I am not saved! Lord I am not saved! I am not saved from my hard heart! I am not saved from my love of sin! I am not saved from the guilt of sin! I am without God, without Christ, and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel! I am not saved!” There are some of you I could speak to very specifically—we pray for you—but you are not saved! You have a brother who prays for you, a sister who prays for you, a father and mother who have

prayed for you—but still *you are not saved!* Husband! You have a wife who never ceases to intercede for you—but you are not saved! We thought you would have been converted long ago! There have been many hopeful signs about you, but you have disappointed us—you are not saved! Take heed, take heed! There may be more in the words that I now speak than if they were my words; for, to this day, God sometimes speaks to men prophetically by His truly sent ministers. The day is near with some of you, if you do not repent, when, tossing upon the bed of sickness you will have to cry in the sight of the approach of death, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved!” You will look back upon these Sunday gatherings with a very different eye from that with which you look upon them now. You will remember your gospel privileges, and value them very differently from what you do now. When you seem to hear the tolling of your own death knell, then you will value the Sunday chime! And take heed yet a little further! There will come a day when you will lift up your eyes in hell, some of you, being in torments—and then, as you look up and see the people of God glorified at God’s right hand—you will have to say, “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended and *I am not saved!*”

And let me tell you, those words will ring very differently then from what they do now, when you have—

“To linger in eternal pain, yet death forever fly,”

to have to say, “I am not saved,” will be dreadful! Then the Lord will come. We are looking for His coming; and when He comes, His people shall reign with Him. They shall rise from the dead in triumph; and when their days of earthly reign shall be over, the great archangel shall sound the trumpet for the second resurrection—and when you wake up and find that the righteous have all risen before you, and have received their

crowns and their rewards—then, as you see the harvest of God borne by the angelic reapers up to the sky—as you see the brightness of the glory of the new Jerusalem taken up into the clouds to be withdrawn from the place where men shall stand to be judged, you will say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and *we are not saved!*” Oh, then you will cry, “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! We are not saved!” Those mountains shall have no ears for you—those rocks shall have no heart of compassion for you—there shall only be a dread reverberation of your awful cry, “*We are not saved! We are not saved!*” And when hell opens wide her jaws, and her tongue of fire shall lick up the ungodly, then, “We are not saved! We are not saved! We are not saved!” will be in sorrowful contrast to that ever-swelling, ever-increasing song, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!”

Shall it be, “Hallelujah,” sinner, or shall it be, “We are not saved”? May God’s eternal grace work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and so make you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; and then may the question be decided and may you not have to say forever, “*We are not saved.*” May God bless these words for Christ Jesus’ sake. Amen.

## **609 KNOWLEDGE COMMENDED – DAN. 11:32-33**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 15th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“But the people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. And they who understand among the people shall instruct many.” — Daniel 11:32-33**

THE UNINSPIRED BOOK of the Maccabees is perhaps the best interpreter of this passage in Daniel. The prophet, we think, refers to the great persecution under Antiochus, when the followers of Judas Maccabees, knowing their God and keeping close to Him amidst general defection, refused to bow before the idols of Syria; these were strong, by God's divine grace, and did great exploits—wonders of valor we read of in the history of Judas and his brethren, and wonders of heroic suffering never surpassed are recounted of the mother and sons, and those other martyrs who, under tortures of the most amazing kind, held fast their faith even to the end. In that age, there were some who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who felt the violence of fire, and yet were not separated from their God by all that the foe could do. We have a lesson to learn from the text before us, and we, therefore, leave the historical references and proceed to enter into the teaching of the text. It appears that the people who did all this were a knowing people and an understanding people. Those by whom the exploits were performed were not ignorant, but a people who knew

their God; and those who helped to keep up the light of Israel in the midst of the thick darkness were not uninstructed, but were a people who understood.

Our subject this morning is *knowledge*, and especially the knowledge of the things of God. The matter is very urgent and important at this season when we are receiving so many young converts into the church—many of whom need much teaching in the things of God. It lies heavily on my heart that it is my bounden duty to urge these young ones, since they know the elements of the Christian faith, to strive with diligence to learn more and more of the higher truths of God; and if they have received some insight into the wondrous revelation of divine love, I must urge them to press forward till they comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

The question is often put to us in a very general and vague manner, “Is knowledge a good thing or not?” We are expected to give an answer promptly and without reserve; and if we do so we shall very likely be caught in a trap. “Knowledge—is it a good thing in itself or not?” That depends upon several things. You might as well ask me whether air is a good thing. Why, of course, speaking loosely, *it is*; but then, there is much bad air in old wells and cellars and so on, which will destroy life—and therefore, you cannot expect me to say at once, if I know you are trying to trick me—either “Yes,” or “No.” Air is a good thing as a general rule of thumb; the lungs require it, man must have it—it is a good thing. So is knowledge. Knowledge heaves the intellectual lungs—it is a good thing; but then, there is noxious knowledge, which it were infinitely better for us never to receive, just as there is pestilential air. Is food a good thing? Yes, but if you are alluding to the decayed meat which was seized in the market, or to adulterated drinks, I am not in such a hurry to answer you; I need to know what sort of food you



are alluding to. Food, in the abstract, is a good thing, but not food universally—for putrid meats will engender disease and bring on ten thousand maladies, and destroy the life which food is meant to sustain. So is it with knowledge. It is the food of the mind; and yet there is a knowledge which is deadly, poisonous, infectious, full of all manner of mischief, and they who know nothing of it are wise. Is water a good thing? Again I answer, “Yes,” in the abstract. So many watery particles are absolutely necessary to the building up and sustenance of the human frame, that every thirsty man knows that water is good. Yet there is bad water; there have been poisoned wells—water stagnates and becomes putrid and injurious to life—water is good taken abstractedly. But there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil stood in paradise—mark that—but it ruined paradise, mark that, too!

A man may know much and he may still stand in his integrity—but the chances are that, while men are what they are, there will be a serpent in the Tree of Knowledge, seeking the ruin of souls. If you want to judge concerning the good or evil of knowledge, you must ask yourself, *what is its source?* To have one's lips touched with a live coal is a choice blessing if the seraph brings that coal from off the altar of God; but there are tongues which are set on fire in hell—and who desires to feel such accursed flame? You must know from where the coal comes before you may consent that it shall touch your lips. Knowledge may be tested by considering its character. Some knowledge is like the light of the moon—clear, cold, barren, if not injurious to health; but heavenly knowledge is fructifying, healthful, and genial, chasing away disease like the warm rays of the sun. You may make knowledge good or evil by the way in which you use it. If it is a torch, you may carry it with you to kindle the flame of Tophet's fire; or, on the other hand, by that

heaven-lit torch you may, through divine grace, find your way to the gates of paradise! Judge knowledge, therefore, with discretion, and while you seek it, as in the abstract, an eminently good thing, yet be not in haste to plunge yourself into every abyss to find its bottom, nor into every burning crater to fathom its depth. I know enough of poison without drinking it, and enough of sin without running into it. This much by way of introduction—we come now to the text.

Here we have *knowledge of a peculiar kind referred to; then its happy influence*—it makes men strong to do great exploits. Next, we shall consider *the means of its attainment*; fourthly, just a hint *as to its danger*; and fifthly, *the duty of spreading it*, contained in the 33rd verse, “They who understand among the people shall instruct many.”

**I.** First, then, there is **A SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO**—“The people who *do know their God*.”

To know God is the highest and best form of knowledge. But what can we know of God? Nothing but what He has been pleased to reveal to us. He has revealed something of Himself in the book of nature, and much more in the book of revelation; and He has been pleased to cast a vivid light upon the book of revelation by manifesting Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world. Those who know the Lord should believe in *the unity of His essence and subsistence*. “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” There should be no mistaken notions here—the unity of the Godhead is fundamental, and mistakes here are fatal. We should know the Lord in *the plurality of His persons*. God said, “Let *us* make man in our *own* image.” Let not man be content until he knows something of the “us” from whom his being was derived. Endeavor to know the Father; bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son; receive the kiss of His love; let the ring which is the token of His eternal

faithfulness be on your finger; sit at His table, and let your heart make merry in His grace. Seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, and yet, in unspeakable condescension of grace, became Man for our sakes. Know Him in the singular complexity of His nature—eternal God, and yet suffering, finite Man; follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of Deity, and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know something of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, your all.

Forget not the Holy Spirit—endeavor to get as clear a view as you can of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order—who now visits the chaos of your soul, and makes order there. Behold Him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus, and then, afterwards, rests upon *you* who are as the skirts of His garments. Get a clear idea, then, of the Trinity in unity. Do not reason about it; do not try to understand it—remember, it is not your duty to *comprehend*, but to *apprehend* such truths of God as these—you are to *believe*, rather than to reason. One God in the Trinity of His persons, let us know and worship Him; for remember that those who do not know this, very seldom know much else about divine things; for it is a very remarkable fact that when the doctrine of the Trinity is given up, the other doctrines of the evangelical system are pretty sure to be cast to the winds. This doctrine of the Trinity in unity seems to be the place of standing or falling with public teachers and private believers.

Let us study to be well instructed in the *divine attributes*, and ask for grace to know them all. Be not like those who dream of a God who is all love, and nothing else. These persons talk in maudlin sentences, as if they believed in an effeminate God who winks at sin, and is utterly destitute of one single atom of integrity or holiness! Believe God to be what He most certainly is—a God terrible, as well as benevolent, who will by no means spare the guilty—and yet passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin. See God in the suffering body and soul of Christ Jesus upon Calvary, and you will understand how He is severely just in punishing sin in Him upon whom sin was made to meet, and yet supremely gracious in providing such a way of escape for guilty souls! Do not be content with a maimed and distorted view of God’s attributes! Feel Him to be omnipresent—let it be your delight to know that you have not to call upon Him as one who is afar off, but ever near at hand. Recognize Him as omnipotent—know that there is nothing which He cannot do, and therefore, doubt Him not. Forget not His absolute sovereignty, but meekly submit to it. The failure of many men, in their ideas about God, is that they imagine Him to be *subject* to law instead of being the source and fountain of all law; they arraign His actions at their bar, and forget His terrible reply! “No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” They have not heard the solemn voice, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Although to perfection, you cannot find out God, yet do not worship Him as did the Athenians under the title of, “The unknown God.” Endeavor to understand how love unbounded meets with justice unlimited, and sovereignty without control—how “Holiness

becomes His house,” and yet how tender-hearted affection towards His creatures ever dwells in Him. Do not worship ignorantly! Whatever else you do not know, do know the character of your God. “They who know Your name will put their trust in You.”

Then labor to know God in His *actions*; study well the past. Do not be ignorant of the great work of creation! If you have the skill, look at that creation in the light of modern science as far as that light is really derived from facts, and not from conjectures. Pry into God's great works in providence—begin your pilgrimage of study at the gates of Eden, and travel onward to the present time. Float safely in your meditations with Noah in the ark! Study the wonderful justice of God in thus sweeping away the race of men. I have not time to linger on any one particular spot this morning—if I might, I should have selected the Red Sea. Remember what Jehovah did at the Red Sea and by the brooks of Arnon! Tell how He made bare His arm, and swept away His foes! Take Miriam's timbrel and sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously! Or, if that contents you not, remember Og and Sihon, or exult over Sisera in Deborah's song—“Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.” Think of the deeds of God in later times when He smote Sennacherib, and laid His hosts dead at midnight. Tell how He brought forth His people from the land of captivity with rejoicing, and built up the walls of Jerusalem once more. Let, especially, the actions of God concerning Christ be very dear to you. Fly back to the eternal council—you will not be intruding if your faith can enter that great council chamber of eternity. Think of the covenant, the suretyship, the provision, the almighty decree! See Jesus Christ coming forth from the bosom of the Father, amid the song of angels, to hang upon a woman's breast; trace the history of your

incarnate God—make the life of Christ be with you a household study—know every corner of it. Never let a question be asked of the youngest of you, concerning the life of Jesus, which you cannot answer. The rhetorician studies the classics; the old Roman orators were familiar with Demosthenes, and the Greek poets—so let the Christian make the life of Jesus his first study, and with every single passage in it let him be familiar. Know the Savior from the weakness of the cradle to the triumph of His ascension, when, leading captivity captive, He mounted the Father’s throne to reign forever.

If you have mastered all this, seek to know something of *the teaching of the Spirit of God concerning the plan of salvation*. Do not be content to be saved in the dark; try to find out how it is that you are saved. You are on a rock; but look at the rock and understand why it is a rock, and how you came to be standing on it. I believe that very much of current Arminianism is simply ignorance of gospel doctrine; and if people began to study their Bibles, and to take the Word of God as they find it, they must inevitably, if believers, rise up to rejoice in the doctrines of grace. Bolingbroke was far gone in infidelity, and yet when he met Mr. Whitefield one morning, he said to him, “Sir, if the Bible is true, Calvinistic doctrines such as you preach are most certainly taught in it; and though I neither receive the Bible nor Calvinistic doctrines, if you want to have these doctrines proved from the Bible at any time, my pen is very much at your service.”

Dear friends, I would not have you merely unite with the Christian Church, and say, “Yes, I believe in Christ,” but I want you—and here I speak to you who are lately added to the Church—I want you to know where this great scheme began! I want you to know how it is that the blood of Christ takes away sins. To know the fact is very precious, but to understand

the *reason* of that fact is so comforting, so establishing, so every way to be desired, that I would have you study much the Word of God till you get a clear view of the whole scheme. I want you to understand the reasons from election onward to final perseverance, and from final perseverance to the second advent, the resurrection, and the glories which shall follow, world without end!

I have thus brought out what I think is the idea of the text about the people *knowing their God*; but we must not overlook that little word *their*—"They who know *their* God." It is not, "They who know God," but, "*their* God." To know anything of Him aright, you must get a firm hold of God; He must be *your* God. "There is no praying," said one old man who used to be much in prayer, "till you come to a close grip." There must be a blessed familiarity with God; you must know Him to be yours, because He gave Himself to you in the eternal covenant; yours because He has promised Himself to you in His Word; yours because you take Him by an act of simple faith; yours because you, every day, put yourself beneath His guidance, and desire to be a soldier under His command; yours to have and to hold through life, in death and in eternity, because He has laid hold of you, and will hold you even to the end. "The people who know their God." Ah, that is one of the choicest things a human tongue can ever say, "*My* God! *My* God!" Ah, Thomas, you learned a great lesson when, with your hand in Jesus' side, you could say not only, "Lord, God," but "*My* Lord, and *my* God!" O, may you all be among the people who know *their* God!

**II. THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF THIS KIND OF KNOWLEDGE** next requires our notice.

The text shows that it strengthens, gives courage, energy, vigor, resolution, daring, success. They who know their God are strong and do exploits. The Romish Church thinks a great deal of implicit faith—of the faith which cannot apprehend

what it believes. Now, we agree with Romanists in this— that we are to believe what we cannot *comprehend*; but we do not agree with them in the other—that we are to believe what we cannot *apprehend*. You remember the faith of the coal miner? “What do you believe?” “I believe what the Church believes.” “But what does the Church believe?” “Oh, the Church believes as I believe.” “Well, but what do you and the Church believe?” “Why, we both believe the same thing.” Now, Romanists may set great store by that kind of faith, and they go the right way to induce it very often by denying the Bible to the common people, or by neglecting education so that the masses are unable to read the Word when they *can* get it. If you say, “You believe as I believe, and I believe as you believe, and we both believe the same thing,” I tell you that you are no credit to your teacher, and the sooner you give up your faith, the better! A man cannot believe what he does not apprehend. He may say, “I am prepared to believe it when I do apprehend it,” but as to believing what he has never been told, it is quite impossible. If there are any dogmas of Mother Church which I have not heard of, I do not believe them, and if I stand up and say I do, I am talking nonsense! If I say I am prepared to believe when I shall have been told, that may be—but I cannot *already* believe them—for belief must be parallel with apprehension; a man must apprehend a thing or he cannot believe it.

Knowledge strengthens the spiritual man because, in the first place, *it is that on which faith has to feed*. Where there is faith, knowledge is a great gain. This will be clear to all of you who read attentively your Bible, because the words, “to know,” and, “to believe,” are frequently used in Scripture almost synonymously. If you turn to the 10th chapter of John’s gospel, you will find, at the 38th verse, that the Savior said, “But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”



And then, in the first epistle of John, in the 2nd chapter, at the third verse, we have an expression which is tantamount to the one I have already referred to. “And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” We are sure of our faith and of our knowledge by walking in obedience to Him. The source from which Christian faith comes proves the importance of knowledge. How does faith come to the Christian? By sitting still and looking at 50 or a hundred wax candles? By admiringly gazing upon a impassive Madonna at the corner of the street? By hearing language which I cannot comprehend repeated by men in a peculiar dress? Never, according to Scripture! How then? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” There is the whole history of faith—the Word of God gives the teaching which blesses us with knowledge, and then comes faith. The sight of the eyes, religious awe, impressions of dread, emotions of wonder—these do not give faith—but hearing something which I can apprehend is the means of my believing!

Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being people who are enlightened and taught of the Lord; they are said to “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all truths of God, and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. They are not kept in darkness that they may believe, but put into the light of God that they may believe. Here is the difference between the religion of Christ, and the religion of antichrist. Moreover, there is provided in the Church of God an agency which proves that knowledge is to be the food of faith. To what end is the ministry ordained but this—“For the edification of the saints.” Are we not called teachers? That preacher who does nothing but excite the people, who teaches nothing, and declares no definite doctrine, had better lay aside his office and take to some honest employment where he may do no more mischief.

*Teaching* is what we need—a true minister is a *teacher* to his people, a *steward* of God bringing forth things, “both new and old.”

You see, then, that if knowledge is under God the Holy Spirit, truly the food of faith, then, in order to be strong—since faith is the very sinew of human strength—we must get much knowledge of the things of God. The people who know their God shall be strong in faith and shall do great exploits.

Think again, dear friends, *of the influence of faith upon all the other graces of God*. Love is the sweetest of all; but how can I love till knowledge gives me a view of Christ? Knowledge opens the door, and then, through that door, I see my Savior. Or I may use another expression—knowledge takes the portrait of Christ, and when I see that portrait, then, I love Him. I cannot love a Christ I do not know, at least, in some degree; and if I know nothing about the excellencies of Christ—what He has done for me, and what He is doing now—I cannot love Him! In Christ’s case, to know is to love, and the more I know, the more I shall love.

Look at *hope* again. How can I hope for a thing if I do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but then, till I get knowledge, there is something in front of the glass, I can see nothing whatever; but knowledge takes away the impediment, and then, when I look through the optic glass, I can see the glory to be revealed. But I cannot hope for that of which I know nothing whatever! I must know there is a heaven or I cannot hope for it.

Then, take *patience*. How shall I have patience unless I have heard, as James says, of the patience of Job; unless I know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which my heavenly Father gives me? Knowledge gives me reasons for patience. I cannot stop on this point, but there is no one single grace of

the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. Knowledge becomes, then, of the highest importance.

Again, from the connection of the text, it appears that many were led astray in the days of Antiochus. “Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people who know their God shall be strong,” and so on. It seems, then, that to know God is *a means of steadfastness*. Who are the people that are greatly troubled by new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up? Why, the people who do not know their God! Certain young folks say to me, “O sir, I have read a new book—there is a great discovery made about development. Animals were not created separately, but grew out of one another by degrees of gradual improvement.” Go and ask your grandmother about it! And what does she say as she takes off her spectacles? “Why,” she says, “I was reading ‘There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.’” Say to her, “Do you not feel alarmed about your faith?” “No,” she says, “if they were to discover 50,000 things, it would not trouble me, for, ‘I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’” You think she is a simpleton, perhaps—she might far more properly think you the same! Every now and then, there comes up a heresy—some woman turns “prophetess” and raves; or some lunatic gets the idea that God has inspired him, and there are always fools ready to follow any impostor. Who are those that go after them? Those who do not know God; for those who do know Him, say—

“Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I’d call them vanity and lies,

And bind the gospel to my heart.”

Brethren, if a truly godly minister has for six or seven years been teaching a people, and he gives them the good, solid truth of God, and they receive it and understand it, I should not like to see the wolf come in; but I do not believe he would do much mischief, for many strong men will be found to slay the intruder! But if there is a ministry which only consists of preaching up moral duties, and creating the titillation of excitement, then, if the wolf comes, he may just glut himself with the blood of professors, for there is no strength in them to resist him! We need sound doctrine to give us stability. May God grant that we may be rooted and grounded in Christ, and that we may know the things which are revealed to us of God!

Only once more, and then we leave the second point. Knowledge will clearly be seen by you to be a great means for enabling you to do great exploits, if you think of *its bearing upon usefulness*. A Christian without knowledge, for instance, is an admirable man in the holiness of his life; but to what other end, to what other purpose can you put him? He must not enter the pulpit—if he is already there, he had better retire. He must not be a church officer. It would be foolish to choose the feeblest among us to be our leaders. He is scarcely of any use in the Sunday school class—he may manage to hear the children read, and to wile away the time; but if he were a true Christian instructor, he would open up the Scriptures and explain them. Do not, any of you, feel grieved at what I am saying? I am speaking to those who have been lately converted. You are believers—I am rejoicing in it—rejoicing that you are converted, however little your knowledge; but I want you to feel dissatisfied with your ignorance, and to seek, in order to your usefulness, to know the ground and the reason for the things you believe, and to understand, as far as you *can*, the deep

things of God. Do not be content to be always children—you will never be men unless you are children first; do not be content to be stunted in your understanding, but ask to grow in divine grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the sake of your own usefulness.

**III. We come, in the third place, TO NOTICE HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE MAY BE OBTAINED.**

Time has fled, and therefore, we will not enlarge, but just give the outline. *Search the Scriptures!* Do not merely *read* them—search them; look at the parallel passages; collate them; try to get the meaning of the Spirit upon any one truth by looking at all the texts which refer to it. Read the Bible consecutively—do not merely read a verse here and there—that is not fair. You would never know anything about John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* if you opened it every morning and read six lines in any part and then shut it up again; you must read it all through if you want to know anything about it. Get those books, say Mark or John; read Mark right through from beginning to end. Do not stop with two or three verses, or a chapter, but try to know what Mark is aiming at. It is not fair to Paul to take his epistle to the Romans and read one chapter—we are obliged to do it in *public service*; but if you want to get at Paul's meaning, read the whole epistle through as you would another letter. Read the Bible in a common-sense way. Do not read it on your knees, as I have known some people do—it is an awkward posture—get into an easy chair and read it in comfort. Pray after you have read it as much as you like, but do not make a penance of what ought to be a pleasure. And when you are reading it, if you come to a knotty point, do not skip it. You all have some Christian friend who knows more than you do—go to him and try to get the thing explained. Above all, when you have read any passage, and understand it, act it out, and ask the

Spirit of God to burn the meaning into your conscience till it is written on the fleshy tables of your heart.

Next, *use good helps to your Bible*. I do not know better helps for the common mass of people than, “The Confession of Faith,” or the little Catechism. With the little Catechism and texts of Scripture, any believer, however ignorant, can, in a very short time, get a good view of the things of God. I believe that the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism has more divinity in it than nine out of ten of the modern printings; and if any person would know and understand that, he need not be afraid but what he will be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, provided the hope is in him.

Next, *be sure to attend a teaching ministry*. Do not be always after sweets. Do not be running after prophesying and novelties. Try to see the whole range of Scripture. Believe in Calvinism—but if there is a single truth of God which only the Arminians hold, believe that, too. Do not put your feet into Chinese shoes to be squeezed after the current fashion into an orthodox shape; be willing to have a broad understanding—receive anything which God has revealed, and be content to take the whole of God’s truth, whether you can make it into a system or not.

Then I should say, if you want to understand much, *be much in prayer*. Prayer cuts many a Gordian knot. *Be much in communion with God*. You cannot know God at a distance. Get close to Him—come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ—come very close to Him. The other night, in prayer, I remember, by mistake, quoting an old Scripture—that we might weep, like the priests, “between the porch and the altar”—and I was corrected by a brother for it. He said, “We do not need to stand between the porch and the altar, because, in prayer, the proper place for a Christian is *beyond* the altar. The sacrifice is *finished*, and we are to go through the court of the priests, and enter into the Most Holy Place—into that which is within the veil, where

our Forerunner entered for us.” Endeavor, therefore, to get a good view of the types of Scripture. When you have made a mistake about them, be willing to be corrected, but try to understand the types by getting the substance in your own experience—that is the best way of knowing them. And, remember, there is one school to which you can all go, where you will all learn; our Savior says, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God or not.” Practical holiness is a grammar school in which we may learn the doctrines of grace.

**IV.** And now, I want to say **ONE WORD BY WAY OF CAUTION** and it shall be scarcely more than a word.

Remember that knowledge of itself—with all its excellencies and virtues when God blesses it—has a danger in it to you. “Knowledge,” says the apostle, “puffs up.” So it does. You may get proud of what you know, and then, God forgive you and deliver you from it! And, moreover, you may get so positive about what you know that you may have made up your mind never to know any more. I know some of that kind—they know everything—every doctrine which is brought forward that they have not received already must be rejected because they have made up their minds that they have the whole of revelation by heart; they have “meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,” and think they know wisdom to perfection. Do not get into that state. Your knowledge may even make you haughty to the people of God. You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you, and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God; for knowledge is, after all, but a talent, and divine grace is always better than gifts. Try to get divine grace to make the gift right, and as you grow in knowledge, which may prove to be the sails, humility will prove an admirable ballast. To this end, I ask the help of

the Holy Spirit that what you know may be rightly known, for then it will not exalt you, but make you lie at the foot of the cross. O that God might thus teach and thus instruct us all!

**V.** And now to close—here is **THE DUTY OF SPREADING THIS KNOWLEDGE WHEN WE HAVE IT.** “They who understand among the people shall instruct many.”

It is a prophecy which is fulfilled, but it is also a suggestion of a duty which we have to carry out. Are we instructing many, those of us who know the Lord? “Well,” says one, “I am. I am endeavoring to do my best in the Sunday school, in the catechumen class, and so on.” God speed you, dear friend; God speed you in your good work; God speed you a thousand-fold more than you have yet learned to ask or even think! But there must be some here who are not teaching others. Of course, our business is to begin with teaching our own children. When the services used to be in the morning and afternoon in the olden times, the evening was generally spent with the children in teaching and catechizing. I do not think we in London could go back to the old plan; but I am not sure that the present one is an improvement, whether the children might not learn much more if the parents did give the Sunday evening constantly to their instruction. At any rate, no mother, no father—especially no mother—should allow a Sunday to pass over her head, if she knows the things of God, without having her little ones around her, and teaching them what she herself knows. The Sunday school teacher does well, but he cannot relieve parents from the responsibility of teaching their own children.

Others might take a wider range. Might you not get up Bible-readings at your house? If God has taught you a truth which others do not know, could you not find others in your neighborhood who might be willing to come to your house and understand the things of God from you or someone else? If they will not come, have you not the instinct to get at them



some other way? Cannot you so weave the common events of life into a means of Christian instruction that you are truly “all things to all men”? Put in words edgewise, so as to instruct casual visitors. We have not a system of class meetings as among our Wesleyan friends; it would be a great mercy if we had something like they had; and it would be a good thing if the elders of this church would constantly look after the younger ones. Get seven, eight, or nine to meet you as a class; get a textbook and study it by the light of the Word of God; we have some admirable teachers here, but I believe we have some who might teach a great deal more, who are not doing it.

Some of you are living at a distance—your work cannot be very well carried on in connection with this place. What does that matter? I would as soon you taught elsewhere! So long as you are working for God, it does not matter whether it is here or there. If you are Christian people belonging to this church, your first duty is here, but if from any other circumstance you cannot throw in your strength with us, why, do it elsewhere! If you want to go elsewhere, of course we are sorry to lose you, but, we say, go, by all means, if you can serve God better! If you feel you *must* attend our ministry because it suits your mind, then come among us, and aid our efforts to do good. Do, at any rate, teach what God has told you! If God has lit your candle, try to shine and let other candles be lit by you.

I have said much on this point, and I close with this remark—there are some here who cannot be exhorted to learn and know much of God, because they have not yet begun to know themselves; they do not know this simple truth of God, “That Christ came into the world to save sinners.” They know it from theory, but that is of very little use. May they know it in their heart by saying, “Jesus, I am a sinner! Since You came to save sinners, I give myself to You. O save me! I trust You to

save me.” God bring you to this state, and when you have received Christ, then endeavor, as much as lies in you—

“To teach to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior you have found!”

May the Master bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# **610 THE GREAT NEED, OR , THE GREAT SALVATION – ISA. 48:18**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Evening, January 15th, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then  
your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness  
as the waves of the sea.” — Isaiah 48:18**

FROM THIS VERSE we may learn that when God smites men on account of sin, it gives Him no pleasure. The voice which speaks is not that of the seraphic prophet, but it is the voice of the Lord God of the prophets Himself. The manner is not merely the majestic formula, “Thus says Jehovah,” but it is supplemented with words intended to remind us of His graciousness, and His goodwill. “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer,” He who rescued you from perils past, “the Holy One of Israel,” the faithful Promiser, who has shown you His counsels and His statutes. Moreover, He challenges attention with more simple, touching mementoes of His kindness, when He adds, “I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go.” As the instructor of their childhood, and the guide of their riper years, He first expresses the most natural interest in their welfare, and then pitifully bewails the folly of His children. Speaking after the manner of men, to chasten His own people is a pain and a grief to His heart—“Like as a father pities his children, so the

Lord pities them who fear Him.” John Knox said that he never chastised his children without tears in his own eyes. Jeremiah, in the most bitter chapter of his unparalleled Lamentations, bears this grateful witness to our Covenant God—“He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” And surely if in the gentler chastisement of His hands, the Most High takes no pleasure, much less can He find delight in that withering curse which destroys the finally impenitent.

Beloved, the eternal torment of men is no joy to God! The ruin of a sinner gives Him no satisfaction. While the calamity is such as He only can estimate, the warnings, expostulations, and entreaties He has spoken furnish proof upon proof of His pity. Hear His own words, no, listen as He swears, listen to His own oath—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” Not vengeance, but mercy; to kiss the returning prodigal; to wash the feet of the guilty sinner; to press the rebel to His bosom, and to adopt him into His family—this is happiness to God! When, therefore, He rises to judgment and pronounces the fearful sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” and casts down the transgressor to hell, and delivers him over to the tormentors—though He vindicates the justice of His throne, it is—“His strange work, to bring to pass His act, His strange act.” Even the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction have experience of God’s long-suffering. How tardily He puts off the time; how often He tarries before He inflicts the stroke; how He hides His power while He unfolds His patience. He refrains the fierceness of His anger because He is, “God, and not man!” “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.”

Let me appeal to you then, my hearers, those of you who have entertained hard thoughts of God—correct them now—banish them from your breasts tonight! You may take pleasure in the damnation of your fellow men—my God has no such pleasure; you may find gratification in your sins, but He grieves over them, for as He sees your course, He foresees your end.

Nor is this the only lesson which lays on the surface of the text. Still speaking after the manner of men, I beg you to observe that the Lord addresses words of poignant regret over the *prize* the sinner has lost, as well as the *penalty* he has incurred. So did Jesus Christ look upon Jerusalem. Musing on the desolation to which she should shortly come, He reflected on the preservation in which she might have safely stood. Just as little chickens cluster under the hen's wings, nestling there in genial warmth and peaceful security, so might Israel have found prosperity in her own borders, and protection against foreign invaders under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty. You remember how He burst into tears? Can you ever forget that cry of His, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not"? Such, too, are the words of my text—words which I pray God may stir your thoughts, and be engraved deeply on your hearts. God looks upon the "*peace*" you might enjoy, and the "*righteousness*" that would enrich you, if you would just listen to His commandments, and obey His great mandate, "Believe and live." He sees *you* afar off from peace; He beholds what you cannot yet discern—the clouds gathering around your head. It may be you feel in a dead calm. He utters this pathetic exclamation, "O that you had listened to My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

Sinner! The eternal God weeps over you while you are utterly careless about yourself; the infinite heart of my divine Master yearns over you; the voice which has often reproved you now, mourns your hapless state in plaintive tones. I think I hear the chords of His heart in notes of pity far exceeding all that prophets, apostles, and ministers could ever utter! “O that that sinner would believe in Jesus! O that He would give Me his heart! O that he would be obedient to My Word! Then his peace should flow in purity and fertility like a river; and then his righteousness should roll in boundless plenty, and multiply its grand impressive witness like the waves of the sea.”

And now, instead of giving you the order of my sermon let me speak straight on. How great is the divine grace which the sinner despises! He cannot tell the loss he suffers. And what sweet figures these are by which God has been pleased to set that grace forth! Gladly would I woo you by their charms, but oh, how terrible the consequences of neglect. May God enable me to sound the warning faithfully in your ears this night!

*What loss do you think is that which God bewails on your account?* It is not for you, O sinner, to understand, or to appreciate such blessings as you have never known or possessed. We strive in vain to describe the blessing of sight to him who was born blind, or the sweetness of melody to the deaf. “Peace like a river,” and “righteousness like the waves of the sea,” are not within the limits of your comprehension.

Be it so, then; there is a need which you unconsciously suffer. You are a stranger to peace. “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” David Hume used to say that Christians were melancholy people. But that was a happy retort, in which somebody observed, “David Hume’s opinion is not worth much, for he never saw many Christians; and when he did see any, there was enough to make them miserable in the sight of David Hume.” The true Christian has a peace which is totally

unknown to any other man; yes, he has, “The peace of God which passes all understanding.” There are, indeed, two kinds of peace into the secret satisfaction of which no unconverted person can enter—peace with God, and peace in the heart. Yet both of these are the inalienable right of the believer; for the peace which our Lord Jesus Christ made by the blood of His cross has sealed his acceptance with the Father; and the peace which is produced in his conscience as the fruit of the Spirit calms the troubled passions of his breast. *He enjoys peace with God.* Happy soul! He says of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.” The terrors of the Lord do not make him afraid. When he walks in the midst of God’s works, this is his joy—

“My Father made them all.”

When he is on the deep and hoary sea, he says, “The deep is in the hollow of my Father’s hand, and were I to sink beneath its surging billows, I could only drop on to His bare arm.” When the thunder is abroad, and the lightning flashes dart across the jet-black sky, he trembles not—his lips do not grow pale, nor is his face all blanched with fear, for they are but his Father’s servants that do His pleasure; why should he be alarmed? Let sickness of body, or sorrow of mind, or any providence, however calamitous, come upon him—he bears it all with an equanimity which faith alone can beget—because God has done it.

He has perfect peace with God which the tribulations of the world cannot disturb. Between my soul and my God, if I am a believer, there is no breach. No, there is friendship, love, union. The bonds which bind me to Him are the bonds of His own immutability, and His covenant love. This peace of God

must transcend the strife of the elements which surround me,  
for—

“The hand that may ruffle the evening’s calm,  
Bears Calvary’s print on its bleeding palm.”

So, too, the Christian is at peace with himself. Self is an ugly enemy for a sinner to encounter. It is written in the Bible, “And David’s heart smote him.” Conscience strikes hard blows. A good conscience has a keen edge, and severely cuts those who tamper with it. Bad men are sometimes afraid of evil spirits. We have heard of people shutting their doors to keep the devil out of their houses. But as long as the thing called, “Conscience” dwells in their breast, they will never be able to shut out a troublesome spirit. He carries a demon with him who has an unsatisfied conscience. Tell me not of the howling of the wolf, when, in the depths of winter—meager, gaunt and grim—it gets a smell of blood, and speeds on in its ravenous career—conscience is infinitely more insatiable! The deep baying of the hounds of conscience is more terrible to a man than any sound except the voice of God. But the Christian is not afraid of himself; he can sit with himself in the hours of midnight, walk with himself in the lonely road, and talk with himself in the still calm of his meditations—God has enabled him to shake hands with his conscience, and they have become the best of friends!—

“Oh, lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,  
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,  
Who think it solitude to be alone.  
Our reason, guardian angel, and our God,  
Then nearest these when others most remote,  
And soon all shall be remote but these.”



This is a peace which no man can attain unto except the man who hearkens to the commandment, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” And if you hearken to that commandment and believe in the Son of God, you shall have peace and that peace shall be like a river.

The metaphor is full of beauty and not lacking in instructiveness either, by which peace is compared to a river. What does this mean? I think it may suggest several things. Peace, like a river, for *continuance*. Look at it, rising as a little brook among the shingles of that green hill, it comes dashing down a rugged waterfall; it flows along that valley yonder, where the red deer wanders, and where the child loves to play; it turns the village mill; listen to its babblings as it flows onward, sometimes leaping down the wheel, and at other times flinging carelessly its strength to the winds. Now it becomes broad and deep, and many a large and heavy craft floats upon it. Then it swells its bosom—bridges with noble arches span it, and it becomes an estuary like a great arm of the sea, and pours its torrents into old Father Ocean. It continues. It is not a thing of today which is gone tomorrow, but it proclaims its own constancy—

“Men may come, and men may go,  
But I flow on forever.”

Forever, throughout all generations the river speeds to its destined place. Such is the peace of the Christian. He is always at peace. He has not peace like a swollen torrent which is dried up under some hot sun of adversity, but his peace is with him at all times. Do you inquire for the Thames? You shall find it flowing in its own bed in the thick black night, as well as in the clear bright day. You shall discover the Thames when it mirrors

the stars, or sends back the sheen of the moon, as well as when multitudes of eyes gaze upon it at midday. You shall see the Thames in the hour of tempest by the lightning's flash, as well as in the day of calm when the sun shines brightly on it. Always it is there. And such is the Christian's peace. Come night, come day, come sickness, come health, come what will—this peace which passes all understanding will keep the Christian's heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. Like a river it always flows on—no matter what the scenery on its banks, it does not stop. Here is a hill, and there a dale, here the dry and thirsty sand, and there, again, the fat and laughing fields—but the river is still the same. And so with the Christian; today he abounds—tomorrow he is empty. One day he walks with manly stride, erect in health—another day he pines and tosses upon the bed of pain. Today men praise him, and every man extols him in song; tomorrow he is the butt of ridicule, and the subject of caricature; pointed at in the streets, and despised. Today he lives; tomorrow he dies. But his peace is still the same. Like a river, no matter what the banks which overlook it, or what the weather which overcasts it, still it is the same. Such is the deep calm which pervades the Christian's spirit. It is a continual thing—a peace with which the world cannot market—a peace of which the world cannot deprive, but a peace, still, unto which the Christian is called, and it abides with him forevermore.

Since the day I learned to wear in my buttonhole the Heart's-ease plucked from God's garden, my soul can laugh all men to scorn who find comfort elsewhere. And this peace is, "Peace like a river," for *freshness*, too. The water which runs down the Thames, say at Maidenhead, never was there before. It is fresh water, fresh from the hills today, and tomorrow it is the same, and the same the next day—always fresh supplies from the heart of old England to keep her glorious river

swelling and abounding. Now the peace which a Christian has is always fresh, always receiving fresh supplies. We found peace at first through the precious blood of Christ. We have sinned since then, but we have gone anew to the fountain, and have washed again and again. We have had doubts and fears; these at first were dispersed by a sight of Christ—we have fresh views of our glorious Savior and His completed work, and so the river goes on receiving fresh supplies. The Spirit of God was our Comforter 10 years ago. Ah, gray-headed man, he was *your* Comforter, perhaps, before I was born! Before this babbling tongue had touched any man's conscience, you had rested on the cross of Christ, and the Spirit had said, "Peace be unto you." The whole of these 40 years you have had fresh anointings, fresh unction from on high, and so your continued peace has been like a river. Do not suppose, O you who are strangers to these things—do not suppose that the Christian gets a peace like the striking of a match which goes out in a moment! Oh, no! It is the steady shining of a fixed star; not the blaze of a meteor in an autumn evening, but the shining of the brightest lamp which never goes out, and never goes down. Happy that Christian who has fresh floods of peace, peace like a river for the freshness of its streams!

And you know, brethren, that a river increases in breadth and its waters augment their volume. You can leap across the Thames, say, at Cricklade, or Lechlade—it is so tiny a little brook you may almost take it up in a cup! There is a narrow plank across which laughing village girls go tripping over; but who thinks of laying down a plank across the Thames at Southend, or at Grays? Who would imagine that at Gravesend it might be crossed by the tripping girls, or by the skipping lambs? No, the river has grown—how deep! At the mouth of it, I suppose, comparable to the sea—how broad! It is a sort of ocean in miniature. There go the ships, and leviathan might play

there. Not even behemoth himself, I think, would have the presumption to suppose that he could sniff up this Jordan at a draught, for it has grown too great for him. Such is the Christian's peace. Pure and perfect though it is at the first, little temptations seem to mar it, and oftentimes the troubles of this life threaten to choke it. Not that they ever do—

“Men may come, and men may go,  
But it flows on forever.”

True, it seems little at the point of its rise. But be not deceived. Wait. When the Christian is 10 years older, and has meandered a few more miles along the tortuous course of a gracious experience, his peace will be like a broad river! Wait 20 or 30 years, till he has traversed these rich lowlands of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, and conformity to His death, then his peace will be like a deep river, for he shall know the peace of God which passes all understanding; and he will have cast all his care upon God, who cares for him. Thus that peace will go on increasing till it melts into the infinite peace of the beatific vision, where—

“Not a wave of trouble rolls  
Across the peaceful breast.”

Well, therefore, may our peace be likened to a river for its perpetual increase!

Yet once more, the peace of the Christian is like a river because of its joyful independence of man. We have heard the story of a simpleton who went to see the reputed source of the Thames. Putting his hand over the little rivulet that came trickling down the ditch, he stopped it, and said, “I wonder what they are doing at London Bridge now that I have stopped

the river?" His idea was that as he had stopped its flow, all the barges were high and dry, the steamers breaking their backs on the sandbanks, and nobody knowing what consequences might ensue because he had stopped the Thames! But who knew the difference? A child takes into its hand its cup of water, and blows it, and the whole surface undulates with little waves—but where are the giant lips which could blow the Thames, and cause waves upon its bosom? Steadily, pleasantly, laughingly, the river flows on, gliding beneath the majestic castle of monarchs, and sporting past the bowers of the muses, careless altogether what men of might do, or men of intellect think! A whole Parliament could not make the Thames swell with waves, and 50 Parliaments could not lessen the body of its waters. It were well, by the way, if they could preserve its streams from the pollution of those foul and putrid sewers constantly emptied into it! The rivers would be better without the interference of men. Such, then, is the Christian's peace.

I have watched this river as it broke over the stones of adversity; and when the tide of earthly comfort ran low, it has seemed as if the flow of peace were clearer and more transparent than ever! Some of you may have said, "I wonder whether such a brother or sister will be as peaceful when he is lying on his sick bed, as he used to be when he joined our Sunday services." You go, and you will find his peace abounds in the hour of need. Perhaps you hardly expected that another dear friend could bear the loss of his job, and thus come down, as it were, in the world; but to your amazement he tells you how he is just beginning to learn Habakkuk's song—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The devil cannot rob us of the peace which comes from God; neither can the world take it away. O Christian, what a comfort it is for you to think that if all the powers of darkness should be in arms against you, they cannot destroy your peace which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Only let God be with you, and your peace of mind would still be like a river. It would still be like a sea of glass which is not to be ruffled at all. Glorious in deed and in truth is the Christian's independence. Some Christians call themselves "Independents." I believe we are all very dependent upon God, and therefore we shall never be independents in that respect; but, at the same time, every Christian is so entirely independent of man when he leans upon his God, that we may, every one of us, be Independents! We can afford to defy the world to do its best or its worst to stay the tide of our joy when He causes our peace to flow like a river.

What would some of you give to have such a peace as this—that you could go to bed with peace, and not be afraid of sleeping your last, and wake up with peace fearing no ill; that you could go to business not afraid of evil tidings because your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? What would you give to have a great lump of sunshine put into your bosom which you might break up and sprinkle over all your days and nights? Yet such peace you shall have if you listen to God's commands. That you have it not is our regret tonight. Alas! Alas, for you, that you have not listened to His commandment, which is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." If you had listened to it, then the blessing would be yours, and the sweet enjoyment thereof would tranquilize your minds while it caused a tide of pleasure to stir up every grateful emotion of your heart!

Time flies, and I am still lingering upon the former of the two figures employed. I must pass on to notice the other figure which is used to express those good things which the sinner

has missed—“YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE WAVES OF THE SEA!”

Let us pause a moment, and notice how this metaphor surpasses the previous one in dignity, if not in delicacy. Now we can all see a sort of comparison, and yet at the same time a strong contrast between the water of an inland river, and the collection of waters which make up the wide expanse of the sea. One, for the most part, is tranquil—the other always heaving and surging to and fro. So, I suppose, as the words were originally addressed to the Jewish nation and referred to their temporal welfare, the river would represent the beauty and happiness of their own land, like the Garden of Eden, watered by the river of God's pleasure, and the sea, with its waves rolling in majestically one after another in unbroken succession, would set forth that progress which is the renown of righteousness. Generation after generation would witness the rising tide of prosperity. Each chapter of their chronicles would lift its crested plume and tell of mighty acts and righteous deeds, till, like the roar of the ocean, the righteousness of Israel would proclaim the name of the Lord from the river even to the ends of the earth. Oh, what did that rebellious seed of Jacob lose by forsaking the Lord! This seems to me to be something like the meaning. But I want to apply this metaphor of the waves of the sea, like I have that of the flowing of the river, to the happiness of the believer. Look, dear friends, at this precious doctrine of the gospel through the glass of that Old Testament symbol. The man who believes in Jesus Christ has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, that is to say, the obedience of Christ is considered by God as his obedience. So if I believe in Christ, I am as much beloved, and as much accepted as if I had been perfect in a moral uprightness of my own; for the righteousness of Christ becomes mine. But how is this righteousness like the waves of the sea? Well, first it is like the waves of the sea for

*multitude*. You cannot count the waves of the sea, do what you will; and so is it with the righteousness of Christ, you cannot count its different forms and fashions. Let us tell you of some of these waves. I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, but Christ is called, “That Holy Thing” which is born of the virgin, and the holiness of Christ’s birth takes away the unholiness of my nativity. I have committed sins in my childhood, sins against my parents; but Jesus Christ was a child full of the Spirit, and grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor both with God and man—so Christ’s childish perfection is imputed to me and hides my childish sins. I have to mourn over sins of thought because the imaginations and thoughts of my heart are evil; but Christ can say, “Your law is My delight,” and the thoughts of Christ’s mind cover my thoughts. Sins of the tongue you have all had to lament—but grace is poured into *His* lips, and the graciousness of Christ’s speech covers the gracelessness of yours. You have had heart-sins; but Christ has had heart-virtues. Your heart is hard; but He could say, “Reproach has broken My heart.” Your heart was cold; but His fervor was constant, till He could say, “The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up.” Your heart was proud, high, and lofty; but Christ was humble and meek; He endured shame and spitting. You have had sins in worship; but Christ purged the temple, and served the Father in perfection, yes, both in Spirit and in truth. We have sins in private prayer; but the cold mountaintops witnessed the fervor of His supplications. We have sinned against our fellow men; but He loved His neighbor better than Himself. We have many sins against God; but Christ loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and it was His delight to do His Father’s business. Keep on, brethren, keep on; let the list of your sins be long, but the list of Christ’s righteousness will be longer still, for it is like the waves of the sea! What are you—a servant? Well, if you have the sins of a servant, Christ has the virtues of a servant.



Are you a master? Your sins as a master are covered by Christ's righteousness as a Master. I am a minister; I feel my imperfection—but my Lord was a perfect Shepherd of the flock—as He was a perfect Teacher, the perfection of His teaching belongs to me, and I am covered with it. Oh, what righteousness this is! It is like the waves of the sea, manifold. All that the Christian needs to satisfy the claims of the divine law is found in the righteousness of Christ! There is a moral grandeur in the picture here—"Righteousness like the waves of the sea."

The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is also like the waves of the sea for *majesty*. What an illustration of overwhelming power! There comes the rushing wave; the tide has determined to rise to such-and-such a point—who can keep it back?

And ask now, beloved, "Who can withstand the power of Christ's righteousness? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Whom Christ has justified, who shall condemn?" Rise, mighty tide of righteousness, rise on, for none can stay You in Your course. Then it is majestic, because it is *profound*. Who can plumb the depth of the righteousness of Christ?—deep as the demands of the law, deep as the miseries of hell, deep as the thoughts of God. It is majestic, too, because of its ceaseless energy. Sit in the boat, and see the waves as they go rolling by, following each other in endless succession. Never will the sea stop—it boils like a pot. Now, the righteousness of Christ has a *ceaseless energy*. Wave upon wave, it breaks upon the eternal shore of divine justice, fulfilling the counsels of God, while it covers all the sins of His people. Beloved, that righteousness pleads tonight for every sinner who is resting on it, and it brings to you and to me the countless mercies which we are privileged to enjoy. For majesty, then, the righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea.

And the analogy may be traced still further if you reflect on the *sufficiency* of the one and the other. All over the world, at low water, you will find certain muddy creeks, bays, and coves. How are all these to be covered? How will that swamp once more be made to look like a seabed? Who can do it? God can! And there is water enough in the sea to cover every cove and creek; and there is not a river which will have to say, “We had no tide today.”

O careless hearer, what shall I say to you to commend this righteousness of Christ? You may be the vilest sinner out of hell, but there is enough righteousness in Christ to cover you. For every creek of sin, for every bay of blasphemy, for every cove of infamy, here is a flood which will cover them all! The high-water mark of complete salvation shall be gained by every child of God. You cannot measure the all-sufficiency of the waves of the sea; much less can you find a gauge by which to estimate the all-sufficiency of the merit of Christ.

Only once more, to make four points here as we did in interpreting the river: the righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea for *origin*. Who is the father of those waves? Out of whose womb came that mighty company? Who is the joyous sire to whom these children may lift up their voices and say, “Here we are”? “God,” let the torrents roar; “He has made us, and not we. The holy hands of God poured us into the channels which He had dug, and here we are, sometimes as a glass, that He may mirror His awful face in tempest, but ever His willing servants, and His obedient sons.” Now the righteousness of Christ comes not from man. No one adds a jot or tittle to it, but it is of the Lord and the Lord alone. Jehovah-Tsidkenu bared His mighty arm and stretched it to the work, and with Him there was no man. When He worked out the salvation of His people, He stood alone without a helper.

“O,” says one, “I wish I had that righteousness to cover all my sins, and to take me to heaven!” If you had listened to God’s commands, you would have had it. Yes, sinner, if you had believed in Christ, your peace would have been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. That you have it not is owing to this—that you have not listened to God. I will put it to you very affectionately, but with the utmost faithfulness. When the gospel has been preached, have you listened attentively? Do you say, “Yes”? We will go farther, then; have you listened in solemn earnestness, desiring that the word might be blessed to you? Have you listened in prayerfulness, crying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? Have you hearkened with willingness, being willing to be obedient? Have you listened with resolve, determining to do what was commanded you? Have you listened with humility, feeling your own inability, and did you beseech Him, the Lord, to help you? Have you listened with all the powers of your mind, calling upon your entire being, and saying—“Now, Lord, here is my ear, speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”? O my friends, you have, many of you, listened to me, but you do not listen to my Master, and even my poor words go in one ear and out the other. You will go chatting home tonight, and you will seek after your amusements tomorrow, and all that the word might have done will be thrown away upon you. I know how some of you hear—it is always with procrastination. You mean to hear, but you do not give heed with a present anxiety; you do not hear as that clock would bid you, for every tick of it seems to say, “Now, now, NOW.”

Do any of you remember the loss of that vessel they called the “Central America”? I suppose some of you do. She was in a bad state, she had sprung a leak, and was going down, and she hoisted a signal of distress. A ship came close to her, the captain of which asked, through the trumpet, “What is amiss?”

“We are in bad repair, and are going down; lie by till morning,” was the answer. But the captain on board the rescue ship said, “Let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning,” was the message which came back. Once again, the captain cried, “You had better let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning,” was the hoarse reply which came through the tempest. About an hour and-a-half later, the lights were missing, and though no sound was heard, she and all on board had gone down to the fathomless abyss. Do not say, sinner, “Lie by till morning!” For God’s sake, do not say, “Lie by till morning!” Tonight, even *tonight*, hear the voice of God!

O that the Spirit of my God might come upon you and open your ears to listen to His commandment, for, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” This is the commandment—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” To believe, as you know, is to TRUST. It is, as it were, to fall flat down upon Christ—to let Him carry you to heaven—to put yourself out of your own hands into Christ’s hands; it is to have done with saving yourself, and to believe that He who died upon the cross has perfected your salvation. Trust Him, and if you listen to His commandment, then your peace shall be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

The Lord grant that it may be so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

# **611 ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST – ZECH. 3:1-5**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 22nd, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. And He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And to him He said, Behold, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes. And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head. So they put a clean turban upon his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.” — Zechariah 3:1-5

THE ORIGINAL INTENTION of this vision was to foretell the revival of the Jewish State after its long depression through the Babylonian captivity. Joshua, the high priest, with his tattered garments, must be looked upon as the type of the Jewish people in their deep distress. He was ministering before the Lord in worn and filthy garments, to show at once the sin of Israel, and the poverty into which they had fallen. They were so poor that the service of God could not be conducted in suitable apparel, but the high priest himself appeared before the

altar in robes unfit for his sacred work. The set time to favor Zion is according to the visions most near at hand. And Satan, the old adversary of the chosen race, bestirs himself to resist them, and turn away the favor of God from them; but that same Angel of the covenant who led the people through the wilderness, and carried them all the days of old, stands before the throne as their advocate, and at His request, Jehovah rebukes Satan, and begins to bless the people. Joshua, their representative, receives a change of clothes, in testimony that the people's sin is forgiven, and that God accepts their worship. The vision then sweeps on to the day of the Lord Jesus, and the heart of the prophet Zechariah is cheered by a sight of the whole land restored to its former peace and happiness, under the reign of the glorious one who is called, "My servant, **THE BRANCH.**"

While we have been interpreting the other visions of Zechariah, we have tried to derive present comfort and profit from them. We will endeavor to do so on this occasion. We may very properly take Joshua as a type of all the people of God, as they stand in their sense of sin and natural faultiness, subject to the accusations of Satan, but delivered by their ever gracious Lord; and the change of clothing as setting forth the forgiveness of sin, and the imputation of the Savior's righteousness, which is the joy of all believers. Let us take each particular separately, and may God the Holy Spirit shed a sacred light upon the vision, and may we see in it more than Zechariah himself discovered; may we see Jehovah Jesus in all the glory of His love, manifesting Himself to His chosen as He does not unto the world.

**I.** To begin, then, where the vision begins—with **THE BELIEVER HIMSELF REPRESENTED BY JOSHUA.**

The believer himself is described as a priest standing before the Angel of the Lord. Let us mark this. *He is a priest.* Who are

the priests? Certain sons of Korah, who take too much upon them, say, “We are the priests, we are the legitimate descendants of the apostles, and a mysterious power distills from our priestly hands.” We reply to them, it is impossible that you should be descendants of the apostles, and yet claim to possess priestly power, for the apostles never claimed any peculiar priesthood for themselves above other believers, but they spoke of their brethren, the Christians of their age, as being on a par with themselves in the matter of priesthood. “You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). If, then, these pretenders to priesthood are priests in any special sense, they certainly are not descendants of the apostles, for the apostles claimed no priority of priesthood beyond the rest of their brethren, but said of all the saints, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.” The fact is they are neither one nor the other—they are not descendants of the apostles, for they preach not the apostles’ gospel, and know not their Spirit; nor have they any priestly office, unless it is that the old Babylonian harlot accepts them as her foster children, and gives them a name and a place among those who partake in her abominations. Who are the priests? Why, every humble man and woman that knows the power of Jesus Christ in his own soul, to purge and cleanse him from dead works, is appointed to serve as a priest unto God! I say *every* humble man and every humble woman too, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female—we are all one in Him.

We offer prayers to God knowing that they ascend to heaven like sweet odors before the throne; we offer praise, believing that “Whoever offers praise, glorifies God.” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Jesus has made us priests and kings

unto God, and even here upon earth, we exercise the priesthood of consecrated living and hallowed service, and hope to exercise it till the Lord shall come. When I see, then, Joshua the high priest, I do but see a picture of each and every child of God who has been made near by the blood of Christ, and has been taught to minister in holy things, and enter into that which is within the veil.

But observe where this high priest is, he is said to be, *“standing before the Angel of the Lord,”* that is, standing to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true believer. I have no business on the bed of sloth; I have no right to be wandering abroad after private business; I can claim no time which I may set apart to my own follies, or to my own aggrandizement. My true position, as a Christian, is to be always ministering to God—always standing before His altar. Do I hear you ask how this can be—with your farms and with your merchandise? Know you not, brethren, that whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, you may do it all to the glory of God? Understand you not that every place is now God’s temple, and that everywhere is God’s altar, and that you can as truly serve Him in your daily callings as in the assemblies of the place of worship? You know not the true position of a Christian if you fancy that you are only priests on the Lord’s Day, and only to minister before God when you stand in the congregation of the faithful. You are appointed priests like your Lord—*forever*—and you are forever to be offering the sacrifice! By day and by night should your hearts be going up to Him. You should fall asleep with your Master’s name upon your tongue, and when you awake you should say with the psalmist, “I am still with You.” Happy Joshua! Notwithstanding the filthiness of his garments, he is to be commended because he keeps in the position to which he is called, and like the servant whose ear was bored, he does not leave his Master’s house. Come, you



who profess to be God's people, if you have been negligent in the duties of your high calling, and if your hearts at this moment are going after vanity, pray God the Holy Spirit to put you into a proper state to perform the functions of your holy office, and now in the courts of the Lord's house, stand like Joshua, with your hearts prepared by the Lord of hosts to minister before the Lord.

Yet, notice where it is that Joshua stands to minister; it is *before the Angel* of Jehovah. You and I can never stand to minister before Moses, the Mediator, under the law; much less before Jehovah Himself, for our God is a consuming fire. It is only through a Mediator that we poor defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. Perhaps some of God's people here may have forgotten this. You have been searching yourselves and trying your hearts as in the sight of God's law, and you feel very deeply that you are far behind what the glory of the God in the law would ask of you; and therefore, you begin foolishly to mistrust your Father's love, and to think that your service before Him will not be heeded. Beloved, it is ill serving God in the light of the law—but oh, how blessed is it to stand and minister before Christ and in Christ! Then, if I can bring Him nothing but my tears, He will put them in His bottle, for He once wept; if I can bring Him nothing but my groans and sighs, He will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for He once was broken in heart, and sighed heavily in spirit. Gracious God, I bless You that I have not to present my sacrifice directly to Yourself, else you would consume my sacrifice and me with the flames of Your wrath; but I present what I have before Your Messenger, the Angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, and through Him my prayers find acceptance wrapped up in His prayers; my praises become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia from Christ's own garden; then I myself, standing in Him, am accepted in the

Beloved. And all my poor, defiled, polluted works, though in themselves only objects of divine abhorrence are so accepted and received that God smells a sweet savor. He is content and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian as a priest—he is to stand before the Angel of the Lord.

Now, read the next word in the light of your own experience—"Clothed," it is said, "with filthy garments." Did you ever feel this when you have come to serve God? Perhaps it is at evening prayer—there has been something amiss in the family during the day, and you know it. Perhaps, as the head of the household, you have to conduct prayer, and you feel, "O God, I cannot pray, I cannot pray as I would! I am Your priest in this house, I know, but how can I minister before You, for I have filthy garments on?" Possibly your business kept you up very late last night; things are not going on as well as you wish in matters of trade, and you have come here distracted; and while sitting in the pew listening to God's people as they praise the Lord, you have thought, "Ah, I have my filthy garments on; I cannot pray to Him; I cannot praise Him as I would." I know what it is to come and preach to you sometimes, and to feel such an overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, that, were it not, "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would not come on this platform again, for it is hard to feel that your garments are defiled while endeavoring to be God's mouth to men. Perhaps this afternoon, when you are going into your Sunday school class, you will feel much warmth of heart towards God; you will confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price; you will desire to live unto Him and honor Him; but, oh, that dread impediment of conscious guilt—it will make you cry out—"How can I stand before Him who charged His angels with folly, and declares that the heavens are not pure in His sight? How can I hope to have a blessing on anything that I do when I feel a heart of unbelief departing from the

living God? How can I give a blessing to His saints when I need a blessing myself? How shall I break the bread of Christ with unholy fingers and pour out the wine into His cup with a sinful hand?”

But stop, Christian! Do not think of renouncing your priesthood; do not let a sense of unfitness keep you from your service! Stand where you are; for remember, you are standing in the only place where pollution can be washed away—you are standing before the Angel of the covenant! It is before Christ that sin is to be confessed. Confess it anywhere else; your sorrow is not repentance, but remorse. “What is remorse?” asks one. Remorse is repentance made out of sight of Jesus; true repentance is sorrow of sin in the presence of Christ. Foul and filthy as you are, there is but one voice which can speak you clean. Go not away from that voice. There is but one hand which can touch you and make you pure—stand where that hand is close to you, and still, filthy as your garments are, shun not the face of your best, your only Friend; but breathe out this prayer, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. Purge me, oh, purge me now, for Your love’s sake.”

**II.** Let us turn to another individual who figures in the group. We have, in the second place, **AN ADVERSARY**.

Satan stood before the Angel to resist Joshua. Does not his opposition seem superfluous? Poor Joshua feels enough the filth upon his garments without needing to have the devil to withstand him. And I, poor I, do often feel so much my own sinfulness, that it seems a work of supererogation on the devil’s part to lay accusations—conscience accuses enough without him! But yet, so cruel is he, that he avails himself of the times of the weakness of God’s people, then and there to resist them. Observe what he is called. He is called *Satan*, which signifies *an adversary*. He is an adversary and that by nature. His nature is now so vile that he cannot help being the adversary of

everything that is good. From the day on which he was expelled from heaven, and dragged with him a third part of the stars of glory, he has been God's most bitter foe; and as to man, from the hour in which it was said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," he discovered in that humble creature, man, his great destroyer, and he has never ceased to nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman, foreknowing how terribly his head is to be bruised. There is something, however, very comforting in the thought that he is an adversary—I would sooner have him for an adversary than for a friend! O my soul, it were dread work with you if Satan were a friend of yours, for then, with him you must forever dwell in darkness and in the deeps—shut out from the friendship of God; but to have Satan for an adversary is a comfortable omen, for it looks as if *God* were our Friend, and so far, let us be comforted in this matter. Yet, remember, Satan is an adversary not to be despised. Of keen intellect, ripened by years of experience, with a fullness of cunning and craft which made even the serpent, when possessed by him, more subtle than any other beast of the field, he is an antagonist worthy of angelic might. Gabriel might lose in such a conflict, if he did not stand clad in the golden armor of perfect innocence. We, so apt to sin, carrying about with us so much tinder, have need to fear the fiery sparks which he scatters. It is a dreadful thing to stand foot to foot with Apollyon. Read Bunyan's description of Christian's fight in the Valley of Humiliation, and you have there a shadow of what the true conflict is. Better to endure all kinds of temporal pains and trials, than to be beset by Satan. He who wins, gains nothing, and he who fails will find his weight full heavy when the dragon sets his foot upon his neck. You have a stern adversary here, and one who will never cease to vex you till you shall be out of gunshot of him, in having crossed the river of death.

Now you will perceive, if you look at the passage, that this adversary *selected a most fitting place in which to do Joshua damage*. He came to accuse him before the Angel—before God's own Son! Oh, if he could once make the Lord loose His hold of us, then we should soon be his prey! You perceive he does not attack Joshua first, but he comes before the Angel to prevent Joshua's being accepted. If Satan can once persuade you or me to think we are not God's children and not accepted, he knows that he has done us serious injury. In the arsenals of hell, there are great stores of "ifs"—"ifs" are Satan's bombshells—"If You are the Son of God." If he can make you doubt, then he makes a breach in your wall. If you are strong enough to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him," you will then come off more than conqueror. But the drift of Satan is to touch you just there, in that place where your strength lies. He is like Delilah; he feels that if he can cut off the locks of your *faith*, where your strength dwells—then he may put out your eyes, and sell you to the Philistines forever. Take care, take care, when Satan comes to accuse you before the Angel and to make you doubt your interest in the Lord Jesus that you at once leave the case in the Angel's hands—for your Advocate can plead better against the accuser than you can, and it is best for you to hold your peace, and to let that Great Advocate stand up and say, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!"

You will agree with me that the adversary not only selected a very fit place by coming at once to the throne to lay the accusation, but *a very fit opportunity*. Joshua had his filthy garments on. Satan is a great coward—he will generally meddle with God's people when they are down. I find that when I am in good physical health, I am not often tempted of Satan to despondency or doubt; but whenever I get depressed in spirit,

or my liver is out of order, or my head aches—then comes the hissing serpent—“God has forsaken you! You are no child of God! You are unfaithful to your Master! You have no part in the blood of sprinkling,” and such-like things. You old rascal! If you say as much as that to me in my days of health, when my blood is leaping in my veins, I shall be more than a match for you! But to meet me just then, when you understand that I am weak, yes, this is just like you, Satan. What a thorough devil our enemy is! I can call him by no worse name than his own; but if worse there were, richly would he deserve it. You must expect, Christian, when you have lost your sense of justification, when you are conscious of sin, when you feel unfit to minister before God—you must expect that just then Satan will come to accuse you. If Joshua’s garment had been perfectly clean that morning when he went to minister as a priest, Satan would have let him alone; but see Joshua depressed in spirit and heavy in mind—weeping over his sins—then comes Satan, and he says, “Now, I shall battle with him! God will hate Joshua, for He cannot bear filth; He will be sure to cast away the filthy priest. And Joshua is hating himself, too, and so I shall plunge him in despair, and make an end of the man.” Surely, so it would have been if the Angel had not been there! But the Angel of the Lord, by His presence, is ever a wall of fire round about His people, and a glory in the midst. If the lion of hell comes prowling forth to seize the very weakest lamb, the Great Shepherd will deliver the lamb out of his teeth—nor shall the infernal lion rend the meanest of His sheep.

Commentators have puzzled themselves to know what Satan would have to say against Joshua. As I read their conjectures, I thought that it would never have puzzled me, for my question would be, in my own case—“Which one out of the 50,000 things the devil would choose to bring?” Not what he *could* bring, but I ask which one out of 50,000 things he

would choose to bring? Truly, dear friend, if Satan wants to accuse us—any page of our history—any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges! Yesterday, you were impatient, the day before, you were proud, another day, you were slothful, on another, angry. Oh what a den of unclean birds the human heart is! I would to God we could wring their necks, but they are too many for any power less than divine to destroy them all; one chirps at one time, and one at another, and between them they maintain a grievous discord. Talk of perfection in the flesh? The man who dreams of it is either a fool or a knave, one of the two; he is either a fool and does not know his own heart, or else he is a knave before God, and is dishonest, and does not call that sin which is sin. Perfection in the flesh? Why, those believers who live nearest to God, and have the deepest experience of divine things will tell you they have given up that dream long ago! They never expect to be perfect except in Christ Jesus, and never to be complete in themselves but only to be complete in Him. If the old accuser wants reasons for accusation, he may, indeed, find as many as he wills, and continue to accuse as long as ever he pleases—for we are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

I have heard of a certain divine that he used to always carry about with him a little book. This little book had only three leaves in it, and to tell the truth there was not a single word in the book. The first was a sheet of black paper, black as jet; the next was a sheet of red—scarlet; and the next was a sheet of white without spot. Day by day he used to take out this little book, and at last, he told someone the secret of what it meant. He said, “There is the black leaf—that is my sin, and the wrath of God which my sin deserves; I look and look, and think it is not black enough, though it is black as black can be. Then the next, that is the leaf of the atoning sacrifice, the precious

blood—the red leaf—how I do delight to look at that, and look and look again. Then, there is the white leaf. That is my soul, as it is washed in Jesus' blood, made white as snow through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and washing in the fountain which Christ has filled from His own veins." Ah, that first black leaf! That black leaf! Surely, if Satan looks over it, it will be no puzzle to him to find something against you! He may continue to plead against you till doomsday, and always find ground in your shortcomings for accusing you before the Angel of God.

And what was it that Satan was after, after all, with Joshua? Was it that he hated Joshua's sins? Did he bring these before the Angel because he really was vexed that such a sinner as Joshua should defile the courts of God's House? Ah, not a bit of it! It is an edifying spectacle, certainly, to see Satan pleading against sin! It is sometimes good to turn the tables on Satan, as Martin Luther does, and tell him, "Supposing I am all you say I am, yet what are *you*, that you should bring accusations against me? I am no servant of yours, Satan. If my Master does not find fault with me, who am I that I should be afraid because you assail and accuse me? What are you, after all? You do but look round my castle wall, and smile at every rift, and so tell me where it needs mending! What are you but a fierce dog, keeping me awake by your howling? Better that I have you, than be without you, lest I fall into a deadly slumber, and so sleep myself into carnal security and spiritual death. What are you after all, arch fiend, but one who, like a terrible tempest, drives me nearer to my Savior, and compels me to find a harbor in His bosom?" Satan aims at our destruction; that is the point at which he drives. He does not care for our pleasure, it is our total and eternal ruin. Let us know this, and never be beguiled by him. In whatever way he puts sin, let us understand it to be sin, still, and therefore keep out of his clutches. When at the council of Basle, a certain cardinal had spoken very fairly about



Protestants, the Emperor Sigismund rose and said, “Yes, he talks very prettily, but remember, he is a Roman—he is a Roman still.” So when the adversary advances with his blandishments and temptations, remember he is a devil still, though dressed in his best robes! You can always detect him under any of his various disguises—for his desire is at all times and all seasons, your total destruction!

We have now a very gloomy picture before us. We have the poor believer in Christ willing to minister unto the Lord, but quite unable to do so because of his filthy garments. And we have, at the same time, a clamorous accuser who is crying out before the bar of justice, “Condemn him! Condemn him! Condemn him!” And well may that poor believer tremble from head to foot as he recollects how true the charge is!

**III.** But stop, the picture changes now, for **THE ANGEL SPEAKS**; He has been silent till now, but now, He comes into the foreground. “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you; is this not a log plucked from the fire?” Take note that *this rebuke comes at the right time*. When Satan accuses, Christ pleads. He does not wait till the case has gone against us and then expresses His regret, but He is always a very present help in time of trouble. He knows the heart of Satan, being omniscient God, and long before Satan can accuse, He puts in the blessed plea on our behalf, and delays the action till He gives an answer which silences forever every accusation. Do not think, Christian, that there will ever come a night so dark that there will be no light shining for you in it, or that Satan will be able to surprise the Savior, and take you by storm! In the nick of time, Christ will be sure to be your help.

Observe that this rebuke also *came from the very highest authority*. He says, “Jehovah rebuke you, O Satan.” Christ does not merely rebuke Satan Himself, but He prays the Lord to do it. The eternal God, who is full of justice, says to the accuser,

“I have justified, why do you accuse? I accepted My own dear Son in the place of the poor sinner with the filthy garments on—why do you accuse?” That is a joyous utterance of the apostle, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” If God justifies, that very act is a rebuke to all the accusations of the false fiend! Courage, Christian! The voice which silenced your cruel foe is the voice that rolls the stars along—against which nothing can stand.

You must not fail to observe, however, that *this rebuke was founded upon electing love*. You who deny the doctrine of election come here and read this verse—“Jehovah rebuke you, O Satan; even Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!” If God has chosen His people, then it is of no use for Satan to attempt their overthrow. Christ does not here meet Satan with any “ifs,” and “buts,” nor “perhapses.” He does not meet him with those truths which are merely matters of experience, and about which there may be a question—He meets him with the high mysterious truth of God which was settled before the world was—He throws, as it were, this chain into his teeth, and bids him champ that till he breaks his teeth. “God has chosen Jerusalem!” Let that be rebuke enough. I think your experience will bear out what I now say, that it is all very well to live on spoon victuals, and on milk, when you have no trials and troubles; but if it ever comes to a pinch between your soul and sin, if you are in the deep waters of conscious sinfulness, and Satan is accusing you—nothing will do for your soul to meet the adversary with but the doctrines of sovereign grace. You may be an Arminian in the summer, but you must be a Calvinist in the roaring winds of winter. Arminianism is a very pretty sort of theology for a painted boat upon a glassy lake, but they who do business on deep waters, and weather storms and hurricanes, must have a good substantial boat of everlasting immutable love! Otherwise, if the vessel is not staunchly and well built, its

tacklings will become loose, and they cannot strengthen their mast, and the vessel will drive upon the quicksands. Beloved, in my spiritual building I want to get more and more onto the rock, immediately on the rock. I know I am told that the rock does not yield a harvest—that election is not a *practical* truth—but after all, if I want a house built, let me have it on the rock, for if it does not yield me any present practical results, yet I must have some comfort—I must have some place to dwell in the storm! I can go out to other fields to sow my corn and reap my harvest, but for my everlasting confidence, I need a rock.

Rest assured that the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic are the only doctrines that can shut the mouths of devils, and fill the mouths of saints in the day of famine and in the time of extremity. “The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” When I am bowed down under sin, next to my Bible, I love such books as, “*Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty*,” or “*Dr. Crisp’s Sermons*.” Albeit that they do not contain all the truth of God, yet they teach very clearly that part of it which a troubled spirit needs. Does eternal love ordain sinners to eternal life irrespective of their works? Does the Lord absolutely, out of sovereign mercy, make men to be His children? Did God choose the chief of sinners and does He ever cast them away? Does He say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”? Does He declare that He is absolutely justified in doing whatever He wills with His own? Does He, on such terms as that, choose *me*? Then, blessed be His name—such an election as this just suits my case; and I find that believing the doctrine in that light, I can say to all my doubts and fears, “Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!”

*The rebuke is forcibly applicable to the case in hand.* He says, “Is this not a log plucked from the fire.” Satan says, “The man’s garments are filthy!” “Well,” says Jesus, “how do you expect them to be otherwise? When you pull a log out of the fire, do

you expect to find it milk-white or polished?” No, it had begun to crack and burn, and though you have plucked it out of the fire, it is, in itself, still black and charred. So it is with the child of God. What is he at his best? Till he is taken up to heaven, he is nothing but a log plucked out of the fire. It is his daily moan that he is a sinner; but Christ accepts him as he is—and He shuts the devil’s mouth by telling him, “You say this man is black—of course he is—what did I think he was but that? He is a log plucked out of the fire! I plucked him out of it. He was burning when he was in it—he is black now he is out of it. He was what I knew he would be—he is not what I mean to make him—but he is what I knew he would be. I have chosen him as a log plucked out of the fire. What have you to say to that?” Observe that *this plea did not require a single word to be added to it from Joshua*. If you look, Joshua did not say a solitary word. This so silenced the devil that he was speechless. How often Satan has been left speechless! He has made up a very pretty case against us—he has caught us in our worst moments, and he has thought, “I will sift him like wheat in my sieve.” His plans would have succeeded, but there was a “but” in his way—(an unfortunate “but” for him, but a blessed “but” for us)! “But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.” Satan is something like Haman. What an admirable plot Haman had laid for the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews! Yes, but there was one little thing which he had not reckoned on—the Jews had a friend at court who lay in the bosom of the king. And so Satan has often a scheme for the destruction of God’s people, but there is one thing which frustrates him, namely, that they have a dear Friend at court who lies in the bosom of the eternal King, and who pleads for them! And while He is there, poor Joshua shall never fail, for the great Joshua, even Jesus his near Kinsman, says, “The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who

has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked out of the fire?"

**IV.** We have not yet entered into the soul of our text, but here it is—**A MATCHLESS DEED OF GRACE.**

"Thus," said the Angel, "take away the filthy garments from him." Here is a picture of sin removed. Do you not think you see him? They have taken off his vestments, every single piece of the robe which was too defiled for him to wear has been taken away, and there he stands; and as the Angel looks at him He sees the man's nakedness, but He cannot see any defilement, for the filth is all gone! So is every pardoned sinner; so am I this morning—so are you, dear brethren. God has commanded, "Take away his filthy garments from him," and as easily as we take off filthy robes, so easily does God take away sin through the atonement of Christ. There is more than that here; the Lord does not only take away the sin itself, but He takes away the consciousness of it. You feel as if you could not serve God because sin is heavy on you. Look to Jesus, the covenant Angel. Hear Him say, "It is finished," and if you can but lay hold on Him, in a moment you will lose all sense of sin! You will know yourself to be a sinner, but at the same time you will feel that you are a blood-washed sinner—a sinner saved by divine grace, and your soul, with your Savior's garments on—made holy as the Holy One—will venture close to the throne of God and stand there unabashed. That is a delightful sentence where Paul speaks of "having our conscience purged from dead works." Not merely having the dead works forgiven, but having the conscience purged of them, so that you have no more conscience of sin. Sin is gone! You do not stand, now, in God's sight as a sinner, but as one who is perfect in Christ Jesus; you have not a sin in God's book against you, but you are absolved. Christ has said it, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you."

You have an admirable picture of this in Joshua's losing his filthy garments.

Nor was this all; the order was now given to clothe him—"I will clothe you with rich robes." Christ has performed a complete obedience to the divine law. He had no need to do this for Himself, but He did it for His people. What He did is ours; the perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to every believer. We wrap ourselves about with the garments of Christ, just as Jacob put on the robes of his brother Esau; and our Father gives us the blessing, because He finds us in our brother's clothes. Oh, this is gracious, because all the righteousness you and I could ever have, if we had been perfect, would only have been human, but this is divine; Christ is the Lord our righteousness, and we are sumptuously arrayed in His seamless robe.

Here, let me remark that this is matter of experience, too, for the believer gets to feel that he can now minister before God without trembling, because he wears Christ's garments. Oh, how delightful it is to preach dressed in the robes of Christ or to pray when you feel you have Christ's vestments on! Oh, how fair a thing it is to minister at God's altar when you know that you are dressed in the white linen, the righteousness of Christ, so clean that even God's all-seeing eyes cannot detect so much as a spot or blemish on it. Pure, lovely, beautiful, without blemish from head to foot in the sight of God is every justified soul! Oh, Christian, never be satisfied unless you know this, and live in the constant enjoyment of it.

Notice one more thing, and I will not keep you longer. The prophet was so astonished to see the alteration which had taken place in Joshua, dressed out in his new and sumptuous apparel, that he broke in upon the vision, and spoke himself, "*And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head.*" I do not know what business Zechariah had to speak, but truly, if I had seen

the vision, I would have done the same. Gazing through my tears, seeing the Lord's people thus transformed from filthiness to cleanliness, and from shame to beauty, I think I would have said, "Now, Lord, finish the work; make that servant of Yours to serve You; as he is perfectly clothed, now, Lord, put on the turban and make him fit to do your work." Some of God's people appear to me to forget this. They get as far as imputed righteousness, and believe themselves to be accepted in the Beloved. There, they are content to tarry. But, ah, my soul desires even to say, "Lord, put a clean turban on the head of every one of Your saved ones." Some of you, I trust, are saved, but then, how little you do for Christ! My prayer shall be for you—"Lord, put the turban on their heads; make them priests—they ought to be such; You have washed them, cleansed them, and clothed them on purpose that they may be such—but they have laid aside their turban—Lord, put it on their heads." I pray that you may have it on your head today! That you may in your family! In the Sunday school! Tomorrow in your business—in the street, and in the shop! Go forth wearing the turban—ordained to be true priests unto God and exercising your functions! Do not lay aside your office!

Some act with their turbans as our kings and queens do with their crowns—they only put them on upon state occasions—they do not always wear them because they are too heavy. Oh Christian, your state occasion should be always! You are always dear to Christ and always near the Father's heart. Never take your turban off! Believers, put it on, and go forth from this time forth praising and blessing the covenant Angel who, in Jehovah's name, has taken away your filthy garments, and who still stands by! I like that closing sentence—"And the Angel of the Lord stood by." Oh, yes, we need Him *always* to stand by! When you have your new garments on, when you wear your turban, you still need His presence. "Abide with us,"

must be our daily prayer. We still need His strength, His comfort, His smile—the help of His arm, the light of His countenance—for if we have Him not, we shall soon slip from our steadfastness, and have reason to stand again, like Joshua, with filthy garments on.

I have thus preached after a very feeble sort to God's people. There is this voice to sinners. Your case is like that of Joshua at first—for you have filthy garments on. Do not try to wash them. Nothing is said here about washing the garments, not a word! Do not try to make those old rags any better—there is nothing said about stitching or mending. Just confess that they are too bad to be mended, too filthy to be washed, and turn your eyes to Christ, the wounded sufferer, and ask Him this morning to speak the word—"Take away his filthy garments from him, clothe him with a change of raiment." I tell you, sinner, what He did for Joshua, He will do for you! Oh seek His face and live! God help you to seek it, and to find it this very morning, and He shall have the praise forever and ever. Amen.



## **612 JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET – JOHN 13:6**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 29th, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Then He came to Simon Peter: and Peter said to Him,  
Lord, do You wash my feet?” — John 13:6**

OUR SAVIOR had so steadfastly set His face towards the awful sufferings of His passion, that when they actually approached He was not in the slightest degree disturbed or disconcerted. If you were perfectly aware that tomorrow morning, after a night of terrible agony, you would be led forth to a cruel and humiliating death, you would probably feel like men distracted with terrible apprehensions; or at any rate, if through divine grace you were able to be calm and peaceful, your mind would scarcely be in a fit state to minister consolation to others, or to conceive new methods of instruction for your friends. But behold your Lord and Master! It is eventide of the same night in which He was betrayed; He foreknows that the bloody sweat within an hour or two will crimson all His flesh; He is well aware that he who is eating bread with Him will that night betray Him; He foresees that He must feel the Roman scourge, and be the victim of Jewish slander; He knows right well that He must bear all the wrath of God on the behalf of His people; and yet He sits at supper, He

feasts as if no unusual cloud were lowering. And when the supper is over, His inventive mind is fully at work with admirable plans of instruction for His disciples, and among the rest He takes off His upper garment, He wraps Himself about the loins with a towel, He goes to them as they are reclining at full length around the table, and coming behind them He begins to wash the feet of first one and then another. What blessed calmness of mind! What hallowed serenity of spirit! O that our hearts were equally fixed on God in our days of trial and grief!

Without question we may go further, and take most solemn notice that there was in the near approach of death a joy in Jesus' heart into which no stranger could enter. *Now* was about to be accomplished that which He had longed for. Did He not say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I die"? Did this account for His giving out a hymn of praise on that doleful night? "After supper they sang a hymn." Did that account for His adding these remarkable words—"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him"? Did His joy in the prospect of what He was about to accomplish for His people swell to the very highest just about the time when the fountains of the depths of His griefs were about to be broken up, and His spirit to be flooded in agony as He cried, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"? O to know His joy—the joy of loving even unto death!

Let us come at once to the teaching of the Savior, and let it be surrounded with an unusual interest because of the fact that it is His *dying* teaching. Let us see Him as He girds Himself with the towel, remembering that He was soon to be girt with the bands of death—let us see Him, I say, with a more profound interest, because He is just upon the verge of these

terrible depths where all the waves and billows of Jehovah's justice dashed over Him. His sermon beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled," is His swan song; these are the last drops of His life that He is now spending—at the supper table you have the wine which He keeps until now. As we see Him washing His disciples' feet, we shall discover choice love worthy of the last solemn hour of departure.

We shall take the text in four ways. *First here is matter for inquiry*—"Lord, do You wash my feet?" Secondly, here is *matter for admiration*—"Lord, do You *wash my feet?*" Thirdly, here is *matter for gratitude*. Fourthly, here is *matter for imitation*.

### **I. HERE IS MATTER FOR INQUIRY.**

We know that the Savior washed the feet of Peter, but does He wash our feet, also? We do not expect, of course, the literal transaction to take place, but is there anything in the conduct of Christ now analogous to His washing Peter's feet when on earth?

He *has* washed all believers, once and for all, in His most precious blood. But of this we do not speak this morning. Cleansing, as before the bar of Justice, is completely accomplished forever for all the chosen by the great blood-shedding upon Calvary. That is a matter of the past—a thing for which to bless God for all eternity. "We *are* clean; through Jesus' blood we are clean." But here is another kind of washing—not of the entire man, but of the feet only; not with blood, but with water; not in the fountain filled from the Savior's veins; but in a basin filled with water. Does our Lord Jesus do anything of this kind now? Does He do anything so humbling to Himself, and yet so necessary for us? I answer, *yes*, He does.

And, first, does not the Savior perform an action parallel with this when He watches over *the temporal affairs of His people*? You know, beloved, that not a hair of your head falls to the

ground, without His care; in all your afflictions He is afflicted, and as the Angel of God's presence He saves *you* and carries *you*. Your most trifling trouble may be taken in prayer to Christ, and spread before Him with as much certainty of deliverance as when Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, for Jesus waits to be gracious to His own. In every transaction we should adore the providential care of our great Shepherd and Friend, for the government is upon His shoulders. Now, when Jesus thus superintends your mean affairs, looks to your family troubles, and bears your household cares, saying to you, "Cast all your care on Me, for I care for you," is He not, in effect, doing for you what He did for Peter? Is He not washing your feet—for He is caring for your lowest part, and minding the poor dust-stained body. O King of Glory, the stars would not make a crown worthy of You; the tempest is but a poor chariot for Your glory, and the winds are but slow coursers to be harnessed to Your cart! And yet, You stoop from all this greatness to observe man, who is less than a worm, to observe *me*, less than the least of all Your saints, and to care for me as a mother cares for her child! It is even so; He *does* do it; He does, in this sense, wash His people's feet.

When Jesus Christ *puts away from us day by day our daily infirmities and sins*, does He not wash our feet? Last night, when you bowed the knee, you could not help confessing that there had been much in the week's transactions which was not worthy of your standing and profession; and even tonight, when the engagements of this day are over, you will have to mourn that you foolishly committed the very sins which you repented of weeks ago, that you have fallen again into the very sloughs of folly and sin from which special grace delivered you long ago; and yet Jesus Christ will have great patience with you; He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will, be you clean." He will again apply the blood of sprinkling; He will

speak peace to your conscience, and remove every spot. Oh, it is a great act of eternal love when Christ once and for all absolves the sinner, takes him from under the dominion of the law, and puts him into the family of God! But what long-suffering and patience there is when the Savior, with much long-suffering, bears the daily follies of the recipient of so much mercy, day by day, and hour by hour, putting away the constant sin of the erring but yet beloved child. To dry up a flood of sin is something marvelous—but to endure the constant dropping of daily sins; to bear with that constant weary trying of patience—this is divine indeed! To blot out the whole of sin like a thick cloud is a great and matchless power, as well as grace—but to remove the mist of every morning, and the dampness of every night—oh, this is condescension! I wish I could describe it; it is condescension well imaged in the washing of Peter's feet.

Consider again. Our poor prayers which are very much the feet of our soul, since with them we climb to heaven, with them we run after God—*our poor prayers always need washing*. It is oftentimes easier, brethren, to do a thing over at once, than it is to mend and patch up a work which has been badly done by others. Then, what patience it must require in Christ's case to take my poor, imperfect, and polluted prayers, and make them fit to be presented before His Father's face! There are His own prayers for me—I thank Him for them, for they prevail; but I cannot help also blessing Him that He should take *my* prayers, and put *them* into the censer, and offer *them* before His Father's face; for I am certain that before *they* can have been fit to offer, they must have experienced a deal of washing. John tells us that He offers, "The prayers of saints"—this is humbling Himself indeed! Oh, how much of redundancy must have been taken away from our petitions, when we have asked for what we ought not to have desired! How much of omission must have

been made up, when we have forgotten to ask for the things which we most needed! How much of unbelief He must take out of our prayers! How much coldness, deadness of heart! How much formality, wandering of thought! O how much holy life and unction, holy faith and holy joy, must the dear Redeemer infuse into our supplications before they are fit to come up before the ears of the Lord God of Hosts! Yes, in patiently bearing with my prayers, He does daily wash my feet.

Think again. *Jesus makes our works acceptable.* These may be compared to the soul's feet. It is by the feet that a man expresses his activity. The *walk* of a Christian—by this we mean the good works which the Christian performs for his Master. But look at our works! If Christ would simply throw all our good works into a heap, and let them rot, that would be most deserving of them; if He would take our almsgiving, our preaching, our teaching of others, our prayers, and thoughts, and works all together, and just cast them into Tophet's fire—how dare we complain? But instead of that, He is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith, and labor of love, but counts that here His Father is glorified in that we bear much fruit. We remember to have heard of someone who made sugar out of old rags; but then it was found that the sugar cost a great deal more than the sugar was worth; the manufacture cost was more than the goods were worth when produced—and judging from our point of view, this is something like our works. Jesus Christ makes sweetness out of the poor rags of our good works—surely I may say, they cost Him more in the manufacturing than ever the raw material could have been worth, or the finished works themselves are worth, except in His esteem. Could He not, if He pleased, convert men without our preaching? But He will not do it; He would rather that they should be brought in by our imperfect preaching, and therefore, He washes our preaching—He washes our feet! Could He not

save sinners without you, my sister—without you, my brother? And yet, He sets you longing after souls, and opens your mouth to speak a good word to them; and He accepts what you do. But oh, what condescension is there, what tenderness, what divine stooping from His loftiness, that He should cleanse our works. It is more than He ever did for angels! When an angel had defiled his service, He banished him from heaven; but with all the imperfection of our service, we expect that in Christ we shall be welcomed into heaven with the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

If you want other instances of the familiar condescension of Christ, let me remind you of *how patiently He is content to suffer in His people's sufferings*. Not a pang, shoots through that head of yours but Jesus knows and feels it; not a grief, makes that bosom heave in which Christ is not a partaker. “I will make all their bed in their sickness.” Oh, what a blessed text is that! As one old expositor says, “Not merely make their pillow, but their bolster and their bed, and make all their bed, where their feet lie, where their head lies; all, all of it. I will come, and I will have such sympathy with them in their entire grief, that from the beginning to the end of it I will make them happy in the midst of grief through My divine consolations.” “I will make all their bed in their sickness.” Have you not had choice manifestations from Christ in your worst seasons, so exactly fitted to the peculiarity of your case, that you did not know which to admire most, the love which visited you, or the condescending care which so brought itself down to your case, and sat down at your bedside, and put itself so entirely into your position, that it could feel as you felt, and speak to you just the words which your case required? The Lord Jesus loves His people so, that every day He is washing their feet. Their poorest action He accepts; their deepest sorrow He feels; their smallest wish He hears, and their greatest sin He forgives. He is still their Servant

as well as their Friend; still He takes the basin; still He wears the towel. It is not only majestic deeds that He performs, as, wearing the miter on His brow, and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate, He stands up to plead; but humbly, patiently, still like a servant He goes about among His people, washing His disciples' feet. I would to God I could speak worthily on such a theme as this; but it is true, as your experience must tell you, that "He remembers our low estate; for His mercy endures forever."

Before I pass from this point, it is a matter of inquiry for some here—"Lord, *do* You wash *my feet*?" Some of you are not washed by Christ, for you live without thinking of Him. "I never did any harm," says one, "that I know of." I will ask you another question—what did you ever do for Christ? Can you answer that? You must reply, "I have done nothing for Him whatever." Ah, then, if you have never been enabled to do anything for Him, I fear it is because you have lived thoughtlessly, without a care for Him; but, if He had ever washed your feet, you could not forget Him; and little as it might be, yet you would have done something, and you would now be desiring to do more. Ah, my hearers, some of you are so far from ever having your feet washed daily, that you have never been washed at all. "There is a fountain filled with blood," but filled in vain, as far as you are concerned. There is a Savior, but you are unsaved; there is balm in Gilead, but you are not healed; there is a Physician there, but you are still sick; there is life in Christ, but you are dead; the bronze serpent is lifted up, but you are dying of the fiery serpent's bite. One look at Jesus will save, but that look you have not given; you are without God, without Christ, without hope, and "strangers from the commonwealth of Israel." May God the Holy Spirit visit you with His quickening power, and convince you of your sin this morning! May He make you feel uneasy till you find Christ! May



He give you a hunger and a thirst after Him who will never be satisfied till you clasp Him in your arms and say, “Christ is mine.” I would to God that I had not to make this remark, but I must make it in faithfulness to your souls. You are obliged to answer, “No, no, no; the Lord Jesus has never washed my feet.” But then send up the prayer, “Lord, do it; Lord, do it now for Your love’s sake.”

**II.** Our text is, in the second place, **MATTER FOR ADMIRATION**, and that, too, in several respects.

It is matter for admiration when we consider *the freeness of the deed*. “Lord, do You wash my feet?” It is perfectly amazing that He should, for we have scarcely desired the mercy. If you look the chapter through, you do not find that Peter asked Christ to do it. Peter was lying down; he had just been eating at the supper; he had no thought of Christ’s washing his feet; there was not one of the 12 that ever dreamed of such a thing! And when the Lord began to wash the feet of one, the others did not say, “Lord, come and do the same to me.” No, it was unsolicited, unexpected; He comes, without any prayers or supplications on their part, and He begins to wash their feet. Peter is surprised. It is great goodness on Christ’s part to do what we ask Him to do—to hear our prayers when we really feel our need; but does He perform for us such menial, such generous acts, as to wash our feet without being asked? Oh, beloved, if Christ did no more for us than we ask Him to do, we would perish forever; for nine out of ten of the things which He gives us, we never asked for, and what if I were to say that three out of four of them we scarcely know that we want? We do not *know* our own needs. We have a general view of our necessities, wholesale, as it were; but our daily needs, our daily wants, who among us can know them? Christ’s sufferings are said, according to the Greek liturgy, to have had unknown depths—“Your unknown sufferings.” Were not those

unknown sufferings endured for our unknown sins, and to make a supply for our unknown needs—that we might have that multitude of mercies which we may style unknown mercies?

We should not only bless God for the mercies which we have known, but for those which we have not known—for probably those make up the larger proportion. You who are Christians, some of you who have been believers in Christ 10 or 20 years—have there not been many nights on which you have gone to bed without any particular sense of guilt, and without any special intercession for peculiar cleansing? You have forgotten to ask for the cleansing, but He has never forgotten to give it, for He has spontaneously washed your feet. You have risen in the morning; you were not aware that any special danger would come to you, and you did not pray for special protection, but yet *He* knew it; and unasked and unsought for He has followed you, held the shield over you, and kept you from danger. He has washed your feet without your having desired it, or having known that He had done it. Let His name be praised for this. These unsought favors of unspeakable love, these perpetual mercies of unslumbering carefulness—let them wake us now to gratitude, and now may we exclaim with wonder, “Lord, is it so? Do You always continue thus to wash my feet?”

The next subject of wonder is *the Glory of the Person*. “Lord! King! Master! God! Everlasting! Eternal! Almighty! King of kings, and Lord of lords! Do *you*—do YOU wash my feet? You call the stars by their names, and they shine by Your light; Mazzaroth comes forth in his season at Your bidding; You guide Arcturus with his sons. The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; You sit upon the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; You hold the waters in the hollow of Your hand, You mete out heaven with Your span; *Lord, do You wash my feet?* When You were on earth You tread

the waters; the depths knew You, and were like marble beneath Your feet; You frightened grim death himself, for Lazarus came forth at Your bidding from the shades of the grave; fevers knew You—leprosy, paralysis, epilepsy—all diseases understood their Master's voice, and fled at Your bidding. The winds were hushed at Your will—even the devils were subject to You; though You were veiled in Manhood Your creatures perceived Your greatness; angels ministered unto You, and the heavens were opened unto You; *and do You wash my feet?* O my brethren meditate on this! It is far more a theme for thought than for speech. He whom the angels worship takes a towel and girds Himself. Listen to the song, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your glory; all the earth does worship You, You eternal Son of the Father." "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Oh, think of this, spiritual men and women; think till your hearts melt with love! No one else could cleanse us. The infinite God must take away the infinite blackness and filth of His people's sins! What a stoop is here! Let us lift up our eyes and wonder; let us lift up our voices and praise His name, that He should ever wash our feet!

Change again the word. *Observe the lowliness of the office.* "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Here comes a traveler who has journeyed far; he is very weary; there is much dust upon his sandals, and his feet are stained with travel. As soon as he treads the threshold of the hospitable house, a slave, a servant, a hired servant, takes off his sandals, brings a basin, a pitcher full of water, and begins to pour the water upon his feet, having first loosened the laces of his shoes and taken them off. The *host* does not stoop to this office; it is not the part of a *master* to wash feet; it is servile, menial, humiliating work. Yet this, which was the lowest of all offices in the East, is that which the Savior undertakes—not in fiction and metaphor, but in reality, for every one of us. "Lord, do You wash my feet?" To wash my head,

Lord, is very gracious; to purge my mind from evil thoughts is very loving; to wash my hands, to take my heart and make that clean is very condescending; but do You absolutely do a slave's work, and wash my *feet*? Lord, will You take the meanest part of me, and wash *that*? I know You have said, You will sanctify my spirit and my soul—there is much there; but will You sanctify *my body*, too—my feet, the lowest part of the man, the meanest part? Are You not content to leave spot or wrinkle upon me anywhere, and therefore do You humble Yourself to the meanest, basest, lowest action of all—to wash my *feet*?" Truly, beloved, this is subject of wonder! And yet, the wonder is excelled if you remember that He shared a slave's death, as well as a slave's life—a slave's life—when He washed our feet; a slave's death—when they sold Him for 30 pieces of silver, and afterwards pierced His hands and His feet. I put this deed of love in contrast. Conceive Him now in the highest heavens, with the keys of heaven and earth and hell swinging at His side, holding the silver scepter by which He governs all creation—can you imagine Him, as every knee bows and every tongue confesses that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father? And yet He, that same One, comes down from the grandeur of heaven, and the splendor of infinite honor, and He *washes*, absolutely washes, in a slave's garb and after a menial manner, *the feet* of His disciples! Oh, that we felt a tender admiration worthy of this miracle of love!

Once again, there is a note of wonder if you lay the stress upon the word *my*—"Lord, do you wash *my* feet?" Perhaps to some of you this will be the greatest marvel of all—*the unworthiness of the object of this washing*. "Do you wash *my* feet? You have favored me with more mercies than the most of men; You have overwhelmed me with Your bounties; and yet my heart is hard towards You; I am often unbelieving, forgetful, slothful, careless; You might well cast me away forever; because of my

ingratitude You might well say, 'Depart, I will have no more to do with you—I have had enough of patience; I cannot endure your ill manners!' Yet do You, Lord, absolutely condescend to wash *my* feet? Herein You have displayed Yourself more gloriously than ever; Your grace has out-graced itself." Thus would the preacher speak, and he thinks he hears you follow him. "Lord," you say, "I once cursed You to Your face; there was a time when Your holy day was my best day of business—when Your house was a place which I abhorred; Your book was unread; my knee was never bent to You—I boasted of my own righteousness; I was a sinner black and filthy—and do You wash *my* feet?!" I hear a sister, with peculiar tenderness, say, "O Jesus, I would gladly wash Your feet with my tears, and wipe them with the hair of my head, for I have been a sinner; and do You wash *my* feet?!" I think I hear another say, "Lord, I once denied You; I made a profession of Your faith, but in an evil hour I fell; I went into sin. I said, 'I know not the Man!' And do You wash *my* feet?!" I hear another say, "Lord, You know my private sins, my secret vices; I dare not tell into the ear of my fellow creature the faults into which I have fallen! I am only fit to be firewood in hell-fire; there is nothing in me but what is not damnable! I am altogether as an unclean thing; and do You wash *my* feet?!"

Oh, you who are the people of God, cannot you all find some special reason for wonder at this? There are some of you who are so poor, that even some of your own Christian brothers and sisters are wicked enough to be half ashamed to acknowledge you; yet Jesus Christ washes your feet! Your clothes would not sell for sixpence, and yet He washes your feet! You scarcely have enough shoe leather to keep your feet from the cold, and yet He washes them! You have been laughed at, and despised, and ridiculed and yet you have Christ to wash your feet! The moment your name is mentioned, there are some

ready at once to slander you and abuse you—yet so tenderly does Jesus love you, that He washes your foulest part. However, I must leave you to think—for I cannot talk—I must leave you to think on such a precious passage as this. Certainly the angels of heaven will never leave off wondering how it can be that their King, their Prince, their Leader, could so humble Himself as to become a Servant of servants—to take the very meanest of His people, and declare that He will wash their feet—yes, and do it, too.

One more subject for wonder: it is perfectly marvelous to remember that *Christ does so completely wash our feet*. “Do *You* wash my feet, Lord, then there cannot be any filth on them. Do *You* wash my feet? Then they must be clean. It cannot be that *You* could wash, and yet filth remain.” When things are washed by careless servants, they need washing again; but when they are washed by the loving hands of Jesus, washed by Him who made heaven and earth, surely they cannot be badly done. Come, then, you who feel you have been sinning the last week—you who are God’s people, you who are resting on Christ, but have a sense of guilt upon your consciences, and cannot get rid of it, and are sighing and crying—ask this question, “Lord, do *You* wash my feet? Then I will come to *You*; I will come with my feet all filthy if there is such a bath as this to be washed in. If my sins are returned to me, and appear to remain upon my conscience, if *You* wait, still, to wash me from present guilt, and present depravity, then here I am—as at the first I came, I come again; nothing but *Your* merit do I rely upon; nothing but *Your* love is my confidence; I give myself up to *You*—take me as I am, and wash me clean.” I say it is a subject for admiration, how thoroughly clean Christ does wash His people, so that they can really cry, “There is no spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, even upon my feet; I shall be presented holy,

unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.”

**III.** Now we will turn from admiration to what may be more practical—to **GRATITUDE**; I hope we already feel that heaven-born flame glowing in our souls.

Here is matter for gratitude, then. I heard the other day of a meeting for prayer at which my dear Brother Offord, who so marvelously made confession of sin at our great prayer meeting in the first week of January, was moved to make another confession; and he did so in such a manner that the whole assembly was moved, and there were audible sobs and cries from God's people while they confessed their transgressions. No sooner had he done so, than some brother, wise above what is written, rose in the assembly, and said he thanked God he could not join in the confession, his sins were all forgiven him, and therefore he had no sins to confess! He stood before God so accepted in Christ that he had no sins whatever to make confession of. His prayer went far to spoil the meeting and to grieve the people of God! I do occasionally meet with erring brothers and sisters, who say, “I never make any confession of sin.” “I have prayed for months,” said one to me, “and I have never made any confession of sin; I believe all my sins are forgiven, and I have none to confess.” Now, at the very first mention of this, do you not feel shocked? The holy sensibilities of a child of God suffer violence from the very thought of such absence of repentance.

I would have been surprised, if I did not hold myself prepared to hear any monstrosity from persons tinctured with the gall of Plymouth Brethrenism. Concerning that sect, much as I love and respect many of its members, I dare not say less than this—that God alone knows what they will teach tomorrow, for they seem to be given up to the inventions of their own vainglorious minds to concoct and devise delusions

without number. They have one mark of the Babylon which they profess to abhor, for *mystery* is written on their very brow. I pray God to keep our young people from their company, for their professions and pretences are such as might, if it were possible, deceive the very elect! Gracious men I grant them to be, but as to doctrine, as mad as March hares, and as perverse as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke! When I first heard this doctrine of not confessing sins, I was startled. I felt as if I could have no more communion with a man who could talk in that way. Go on your knees and not confess sin? My dear friends, I hope to die with this upon my lips, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.” I hold that I shall be out of Christ altogether, when I reject repentance and confession. I know that my sins are forgiven me; there is no man in the world who preaches more than I do the doctrine that Christ has forever made a full atonement for the sins of all His people; but as to not making a confession of sin, God forbid these lips should ever utter anything so ungospel-like, so un-Christlike!

Let us put this matter before you plainly. It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin as before God the Judge, because they are no longer under God as a Judge; they are not ruled and governed upon the principle of law at all. Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a *legal* sense so that no one can bring anything to their charge, and they need not confess where there is no one to accuse. The blood of Jesus has set His people entirely away from the position of prisoners under the law. They do not stand where they can be condemned. They are no longer culprits or criminals; they are taken from under the dominion of the Judge. But what are God's people? Why they are children, and as long as God is their Father, and they are children, and imperfect children, nature teaches them that, it is



the duty of children to make a confession to their Father. If my boy should do anything amiss—God forbid it ever should be—but suppose it were some petty theft, I might say, “My Child, as far as that theft is concerned, no policeman shall take you; you shall not be taken before the bar or put in prison for that; you are quite forgiven as far as that is concerned.” I do not wish him to go before the magistrate and make a confession; but then he has offended me his father; and I, as his father, expect him to confess the wrong that he has done to me, and if he does not, I chasten him, not by way of penal infliction—that is not my part as a father, I have nothing to do with penalties to my children—but by way of chastisement that he may be led to see his fault, and may do it no more. No father, who has his wits about him, ever chastens his child in the light of punishment for the offense itself; no, he says, *that* is not my business, the offense must be punished by *God*, or if it is an offense against the law of the land, by the law of the land. When a father scourges, he does it for chastisement—for the good of the person chastised—not as a vindication of law and order.

Now the Lord never chastens His people because of any sin in them in order to punish them for their sin—He has punished Christ instead of them—they are quite clear there. But now having become children, and offending as children, ought they not, every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess the sin, and acknowledge the iniquity? The divine grace of God in the heart would teach us all that it should be so. We daily offend as children; we offend, as we could not offend if we were not children. I doubt my Father, I am guilty of a lack of love to Him, or obedience to Him, I offend as I could not offend if I were not His child. Supposing that this offense against my Father is not at once washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence of it? Why, I shall get under the slavery of bad

habit; I shall feel such defilement in my nature that I shall do it again, and again and again, what I had once done, till I get into the habit of doing it. If I am not washed from these offenses against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him; I shall begin to doubt His love to me; I shall tremble at Him; most likely I shall be afraid to pray to Him—I shall get to be like the prodigal, who, while he was a child, was yet far off from his father. If I am not washed, I shall very soon, have need to feel the rod, and I shall have it. But oh, beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ, day by day shall come to me, and wash my feet from these defilements of offenses against my Father, why then I shall, to a great extent, escape the rod. I shall feel a holy love to my Father; I shall walk in the light of His countenance; I shall have joy and peace through believing, and I shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord! I think you can see the difference between Christ putting away sin by blood and by water; I think you can see the distinction between confessing sin *as a culprit*, and confessing *sin as a child*; and I think you can see how much gratitude you owe to Christ, that after having once set you free from the law, He, day by day, as your elder brother, goes in before your Father's face, and still keeps you right before the Father, and when there has been any defilement, or any wrong, He washes your feet from it, that you may still stand with peace in your conscience, with joy in your heart, with love in your bosom, and with the Father's love shed abroad in you!

Here is truly a matter for gratitude, that having once washed head and hands and feet with blood, He still does daily wash my feet with water. For my part, I mean to keep on praying, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us." And it shall always be my joy that, "If any

man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,” and, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

**IV. The last point is, MATTER FOR IMITATION.**

Does Jesus wash our feet? Then we ought to wash one another’s feet. Some of our brethren, the Scotch Baptists, were accustomed to literally wash the saints’ feet. I dare say it would not do some of the saints much harm; but still it never was intended for us to carry out literally the example of the Savior. There is a *spiritual* meaning here, and what He means is this. If there is any deed of kindness or love that we can do for the very meanest and most obscure of God’s people, we ought to be willing to do it—to be servants to God’s servants—to feel like Abigail did, when she said to David, “Let your handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord.” Abigail became David’s wife—that is the true position of every Christian—but yet she felt she was not worthy even to wash his servants’ feet. That must be our spirit. Do you know any poor bedridden soul? Go and talk with that poor woman, or that poor man. Seek to take comfort to that poor man’s miserable lodgings. Do you know a brother who is rather angry in temper, and he needs a kind word said to him, and someone says, “I will not speak to any such person as he is?” Do it—do it, my dear brothers—go and wash his feet!

Do you know one who has gone astray? Someone says, “I would not like to be seen in association with him.” My dear friend, you are *spiritual*—go and restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Wash his feet! There is another riding the high horse—he is very, very proud. One says, “I am not going to humble myself to him.” My dear brother, go to him and wash his feet! Whenever there is a child of God who has any defilement upon him, and you are able to point it out, and rid him of it—submit to any degradation, put yourself in any position—sooner than that child of God should be the subject

of sin! Especially let those who are highest among us seek to do the lowest offices. “Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Remember that Christ’s way of rising is to go down. He descended, that He might ascend. And so must we. Let us count that forevermore it is our highest honor, and our greatest glory to lay aside all honor and all glory and to win honor and glory out of shame and humiliation for Christ Jesus’ sake.

I believe this is done in this Church. I hope we are as free as possible from the feeling of caste—God deliver us from the last relic and remnant of it! You are brothers and sisters in Christ! Love one another! “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted—but the rich in that he is made low.” You are brothers and sisters, and one is your Master, even Christ. Try to carry out, every one of you, to your utmost, the teaching of your Lord—that you should wash one another’s feet. You have an opportunity of doing it in the collection—for I believe that these servants of God—these aged ministers, these ministers who are in great poverty—need today that you should, by your contributions, wash their feet.

[A collection was made for the *relief of poor ministers*.]

## 613 “THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE” – LUKE 11:21-26

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 5th, 1865,  
by the

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At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me: and he who gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”  
— Luke 11:21-26

THE LORD JESUS is always in direct and open antagonism to Satan. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed,” has been most emphatically fulfilled. Christ has never tolerated any truce or parley with the evil one, and never will. Whenever Christ strikes a blow at Satan, it is a *real* blow, and not a fake, and is meant to destroy, not to amend. He never asks Satan’s help to subdue Satan, never fights evil by evil; He uses the weapons which are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds; and He uses them always with this intention, not to dally with Satan, but to

cut up his empire, root and branch. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." There is a deadly, implacable, infinite, eternal hatred between Christ and that sin of which Satan is the representative. No compromise can ever be thought of, no quarter will ever be allowed. The Lord will never turn from His purpose to bruise Satan under His feet, and to cast him into the lake of fire. Therefore, there was nothing more libelous than the assertion of certain Pharisees in Christ's day that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils! O base suggestion that the Lord of glory was in league with the dunghill deity, the prince of devils! He never fights the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons! He has not the most distant pact with evil! It is not possible that He should be the friend and patron of that spirit of unhallowed charity which for the sake of peace would give tolerance to error. No, Christ never allies Himself with Satan to advance the kingdom of God, but He comes against him as a strong man armed, determined to fight until He wins a decisive victory. We shall observe this more clearly as we open up the passage now before us.

Our text presents us with *a picture of man in his sinful state*; then, it gives us *a representation of man for a time reformed, but eventually subjected to the worst forms of evil*; and it also shows us *a graphic portrait of man, entirely conquered by the power of the great Redeemer*.

**I. First, WE SHALL ATTENTIVELY LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF MAN AS HE IS IN A STATE OF NATURE.** "When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace."

Observe that, although man's heart was intended to be the throne of God, it has now become *the palace of Satan*—whereas Adam was the obedient servant of the Most High, and his body was a temple for God's love, now, through the fall, we have become the servants of sin, and our bodies have become the

workshops of Satan—"The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." This spirit is called *a strong man* and truly, so he is—who can stand against him? Like the monster in the book of Job, we may say of him, "Lay your hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?" Though a thousand Philistines are smitten hip and thigh with a great slaughter by Samson, the avenger of Israel, yet the strong man falls a victim to the stronger fiend. That mighty hero, though he could rend a lion, was no match for the lion of the pit of hell who overcame him to his shame and hurt. Solomon, the wisest of men, was outwitted by Satan, for his heart was led astray by the arch-tempter. Even he, who was the sire of men, was overthrown by this dread enemy in the early days of innocence and happiness. He is so strong that, if all of us should combine against him, Satan would laugh at us as Leviathan laughs at the shaking of the spear. Strong he is, not simply as possessing force, but in the sense of cunning. He knows how to adapt his temptations to our besetting sins; he discovers fitting times in which to assail us; he understands that there is a time when kings go forth to battle, and he is ever ready for the fight. He is a good swordsman, he knows every cut, and guard, and thrust, and parry, and he knows our weak places, and the joints in our harness. Christians who have ever stood foot to foot with him will give him credit for this—that he is strong, indeed; and unbelievers, who have at any time sought to resist his power in their own strength, have soon been made to feel that their strength was perfect weakness. He is a strong man with a vengeance. Oh, Christian, well is it for you that there is a stronger than he—the might of Satan would crush you to your ruin if it were not that the almightiness of Christ comes in to the rescue!

It is said of this strong man, moreover, that he is *armed*. Truly, the prince of the power of the air is never without weapons. His principal weapon is *the lie*. The sword of God's Spirit is the truth, but the sword of the evil spirit is the lie. It was by falsehood that he overthrew our race at first, and spoiled us of perfection; and it is with continued falsehoods, of which the lie is both the forger and the user, that he continues to destroy the souls of men. He will sometimes tell the sinner that he is too young to think of death and of eternal things; and when this weapon fails, he will assure him that it is too late, for the day of grace is over—

“He feeds our hopes with airy dreams,  
Or kills with slavish fear;  
And holds us still in wide extremes,  
Presumption, or despair!  
Now he persuades, ‘How easy ’tis  
To walk the road to heaven!’  
Then he swells our sins, and cries,  
‘They cannot be forgiven!’  
Thus he supports his cruel throne  
By mischief and deceit,  
And drags the sons of Adam down  
To darkness and the pit.”

He has a way of making the worse appear the better reason; he can put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—make men believe that it is to their own advantage to do that which is causing their everlasting ruin. He can make men carry coals of fire in their bosoms, and dream that they shall not be burned; he can make them dance upon the brink of hell as though they were on the verge of heaven. Alas, fools that we are, how readily do his lies prevail against us! Then, he has the well-



feathered arrows of pleasure. The strong man is armed with the lusts of the flesh. Dainty dalliances he offers to some—overflowing cups that sparkle to the eye, he presents for others; glittering wealth, he gives to the greedy, and the trump of fame and all the smoke of applause, he promises to others. Weapons? Why, I cannot attempt to mention all the war-like implements of the prince of the power of the air. He can hurl fiery darts as thick as hail. His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of his mouth; when he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid. Bunyan's half-inspired imagination pictured him thus—"Now the monster was hideous to behold; he was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride); he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." He is well armed at every point, and he knows how to arm his slave—the sinner, too. He will plate him from head to foot with mail, and put weapons into his hands, against which the puny might of gospel ministers and of human conscience can never prevail.

Then, we are told that he wears *armor*—for we read that the stronger warrior, "takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted." Certain it is, the evil spirit is well informed in that which is proof against all terrestrial steel. Prejudice, ignorance, evil education—all these are chain-armor with which Satan girds himself. A hard heart is the impenetrable breastplate which this evil spirit wears; a seared conscience becomes to him like leaves of brass; tradition in sin is a helmet of iron. We know some who, through a long period of years, have harbored within them an evil spirit which seems to have no joints in its harness at all. It were as easy to draw blood from granite as to reach some men's hearts—the demon who possesses them is not to be wounded by our artillery. "His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. His heart is as firm as a stone—yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." We have

preached at such men, prayed for them, spoken sharply, spoken tenderly, assaulted them from every quarter, wooed them with love divine, thundered at them with the judgments of God, and with the terrors of His law, but the strong man is so completely mailed that as yet we have made no impression upon him whatever. When we have struck him with such a blow that he seemed to reel, yet the armor has been thick enough to save him from a deadly wound. "The sword of him who strikes at him cannot hold, nor the spear, the dart, nor the coat of mail. He thinks of iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee—stones from slingshots are turned by him into stubble. The flakes of his flesh are joined together—they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved."

Notice, again, this strong man—besides being armed, and plated with armor, is very *watchful*. It is said, "*He keeps his palace.*" He keeps it like the faithful warden who, with ceaseless tramp and sleepless eyes, holds watch upon the castle wall. He does not put on the armor to sleep in it. You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils! The restless activity of fallen angels is something awful to contemplate—"They rest not day nor night"—but like ravenous lions, go about seeking their prey. When Satan enters a man's heart, he takes care to watch whenever there is the slightest chance of the truth of God coming in and driving him from his throne. He puts a double guard on the person when he is under the sound of the Word. He will let you go to those places where the minister never attacks the conscience, and never cries aloud against sin—for he feels that there his kingdom is not assailed; but wherever the true gospel is preached, and preached with divine power, hosts of devils are sure to gather, "Because," says Satan, "there is danger to my dominions now. I will set a double garrison to protect my citadel against the attack of God's truth." Beware, O saints, when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, is working, for the

great enemy is certain to be doubly active at such seasons! He keeps his goods. How would I delight to catch him unawares, but this leviathan is not to be taken with a hook, nor is his jaw to be bored through with a thorn. We may drop a warning to the sinner here, we may speak the passing word of exhortation there, we may stand in the corner of yonder street and declare salvation, or we may occupy the pulpit in Jesus' name—we may use all the means which ingenuity can devise—but Satan is always as prompt as we are, having his unclean birds always ready to carry away any seeds that may be scattered upon the soil. While men sleep, he sows tares, but he never slumbers himself. As Hugh Latimer used to say, he is the most industrious bishop in England. Other bishops may neglect their dioceses, but Satan, never! He is always making visitations, and going from place to place upon his evil business to watch after his black sheep. The sinner's heart must be carried away by storm if it is ever taken, for there is no hope of taking the evil one by surprise.

We have in the text a good reason given why Satan thus watches over the man whose heart he inhabits— because he considers the man to be *his property*—“He keeps *his goods*.” They are not his in justice; whatever goods there are in the house of manhood must belong to God who built the house, and who intended to tenant it. But Satan makes up a claim and calls everything in the man *his goods*. The man's memory, he makes a storehouse for ill words and bad songs; the man's judgment, he perverts so that the scales and weights are false; the man's love, he sets on fire with coals of hell, and his imagination, he dazzles with foul delusions. All the powers of the man, Satan claims—“I will have his mouth—he shall swear for me! I will have his eyes—they shall wander after vanity! I will have his feet—they shall take him to the place of sinful amusement! I

will have his hands—he shall work for me and be my slave!"  
The heart is hard and the conscience stupefied, and therefore—

"Sin like a raging tyrant sits  
Upon his flinty throne,  
And all that's good is crushed to death,  
Beneath this heart of stone."

He claims the whole man to be his own; and it is amazing how readily his claim is allowed! Men fancy music in the chains with which Satan binds them, and hug the fetters which he hangs upon them! Men cheerfully obey the prince of darkness, and yet it is hard, ah, hard indeed, to bring the followers of Jesus to yield up their members in full obedience to the sweet Prince of Peace.

Nor is this all! Satan not only claims possession, but he claims *sovereignty*! You perceive it is said, "his *palace*." A palace is usually the abode of a king, so Satan considers himself a great king when he dwells in the human heart. Divine sovereignty has always been the great target of Satan's attacks, because he aspires to set up his own infernal sovereignty. His sway over men is imperial, and his government despotic. When he takes possession of the human heart, he says to his servant, "Go," and he goes, and to his captive, "Do this," and he does it. He will not be regulated and ruled by reason, but he will have his own will obeyed in all its madness of rebellion. His declaration is made in slavish imitation of the great God. "Cannot I do as I will with my own?" "I am, and there is none beside me." To what extravagances of sovereignty will not Satan go with men! He will allure them to drunkenness, nor is that enough—he will hurry them into delirium tremens; he will drive them out of their senses, and urge them to lay violent hands upon themselves—no, he often covers his victims with their own

blood shed by themselves. An old preacher took for his text, “When the devils entered into the swine, the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.” One of his points was, “The devil drives his hogs to a bad market.” And there is much truth in the rough assertion—when he gets into men, there is no telling where they will go. Another point was, “They run hard whom the devil drives.” Unto what extremities of drunken folly, cruelty, and self-injury will not men go when once Satan gains possession of them? Like Baal’s priests, they are cutting themselves with knives; like the Gadarene demoniac dwelling in tombs, and wearing no clothes; like the child in the gospel, sometimes cast into the fire and then into the water—such are men when the devil rules them. No king could ever walk in his palace and say, “All this is mine,” with such pride as Satan when he walks through the heart of man! He can boastingly cry, “This man will fall down and worship me, he will sacrifice his comfort, his very life to me; he will drain my cups and not refuse the poison in the dregs; he will go upon my service and not ask me whether death is to be the everlasting wages.”

Oh, that God had such willing servants, such joyful martyrs as those who obey the devil! You may see the devil’s martyrs in every gin palace—ragged, haggard, and diseased; you may see them in the early morning, shivering till the time shall come when they shall drink another dram of hell-draught; you may see them in every moonlit street, waiting in the cold, damp mists of night to be offered up upon his altar to prostitute both body and soul to his unhallowed worship. You may see them in every hospital rotting into their graves—their bones full of disease, and their very blood polluted with a filthy taint of loathsomeness. You may see them, I say, all eager to sacrifice soul and body as a whole burnt offering to be wholly consumed by the infernal fire—that they may serve Satan with their whole

heart! Oh, that we were half as faithful to God as the devil's servants are to him. The heart is well called Apollyon's palace, for he reigns with absolute dominion there. O eternal God, drive him out!

I must not leave this picture until you have observed that it is said, "While he keeps his palace, *his goods are in peace*." This is the most fearful sign in the whole affair. The man is quite undisturbed—conscience does not prick him—why should it? God does not alarm him—who is God, that he should obey His voice? Thoughts of hell never disturb him. "Peace, peace," says Satan, "it is well with you now—leave these fantasies to those who believe in them." The wrath of God, which abides on him, never frets him! When men are mortifying, they feel no pain in the mortified member. Men who are stupefied with opium may be naked, but they are not cold; they may have empty stomachs, but they are not hungry; they may be diseased in body, but they do not feel the torment—they are drunk and know not their misery! And so it is with the most of carnal men—nothing awakens them. The sermon is listened to, with a remark upon the style of the speaker, but the truth of God is neglected. A judgment comes—the funeral bell tolls—a tear or two may be shed, but they are soon wiped away, and the man goes his way, like "The dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." "I know nothing of what it is to be troubled in conscience," says one. "I am quite easy—I am as jolly as the days are long." I dare say you are—I wish you were not! If you were dissatisfied with your old master, there would be some hope that you would leave him and return to your Father's house—but so long as you are content with the world, and with the prince who governs it, you will go on, on, on, to your own destruction! Satan does with men as the sirens are fabled to have done with mariners; they sat upon the rocks and chanted songs so harmonious that no mariner, who

once heard the sound, could ever resist the impulse to steer his ship towards them, so each vessel voyaging that way was wrecked upon the rocks through their disastrous, but enchanting strain. Such is Satan's voice—he lures to eternal ruin with the sweetest strains of infernal songs. He can play sonatas so inimitably enchanting in their harmony that it is not in poor mortal flesh and blood, unaided by the Spirit of God, to stand against their thrilling witchery. This is the melodious note—"Peace, peace, peace, peace." O sinner, if you were not a fool, you would stop up your ears to this treacherous lie! Forever blessed is that sovereign grace which has saved us from the enchantments of this destroyer!

The tenant of the heart is called, "*an unclean spirit*." He is unclean, notwithstanding all the peace he gives you. I pray you not flatter yourself to the contrary. He is ever the same, unchanged, unchangeable. Perhaps you tell me that you are not subject to any uncleanness; you say you do not drink nor swear, nor lie; but remember, it is unclean to be unreconciled to God. It is unclean to be a stranger to Christ. It is unclean to disobey God who created you; and above all, it is unclean not to love the Redeemer whose most precious blood has delivered His people from their sins. At his best, the devil is no better than a devil, and the heart in which he dwells is no better than a den for a traitor to hide in.

Thus I have given you an outline interpretation of the text—it would need much time to fill up and bring out the whole of its meaning.

**II.** Now let us notice **THE PARTIAL REFORMATION HERE DESCRIBED**, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than

himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Observe, then, that in the case before us *the unclean spirit goes out of his own free will*. He is not turned out—there is no conflict—the house still remains his own property, for it is written at the end of the 24th verse, “I will return unto *my house* from where I came out.” He retires from his palace of his own free will, intending to return at his leisure or pleasure. There are some persons who appear to be converted who think they are so and therefore make a profession, and are cheerfully received into the Christian Church because their outward life gives evidence of a very great and remarkable change. I could now picture some who, to my great grief, come under my tearful observation, some who were once with us, but have long since arrived at the last end, which was “worse than the first.” When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, he becomes quite different from what he used to be. Very likely the shop that was open on the Sunday is now shut up; he turns his footsteps to the place where God’s people meet for worship. He begins to pray, even sets up family prayer; he attends prayer meetings, feels some sort of enjoyment in the excitement of religion; he goes where the saints go, and to a great extent in life, he acts as they act. The unclean spirit is fairly gone out of the man, and he is another man—though not a new creature in Christ Jesus.

But I have said there was no struggle about it; it was suddenly that the spirit went out, and the man jumped into religion. There was no repentance, no conviction, no struggling against depravity, no weeping before the Lord in prayer, and no looking up to the Crucified Savior and reading pardon in His wounds. There was no agonizing struggle after holiness, no wrestling with evil—joy came suddenly, and the man thought himself saved. The man was a sinner yesterday, and he appears to be a saint today— nobody knows how. You talk to him



about the work of the Spirit in his soul, convincing him of sin, breaking him with the hammer of the law, or by the power of the cross, pounding him in pieces, compelling him to feel that his righteousness is filthy rags; he does not understand you. The unclean spirit is gone out of the man and that is all.

Why does the evil spirit leave a man for a time? Has he not some hellish purpose in view? Certainly he has! I think it is often because he feels if he does not go out, he will be *driven* out, and he thinks that by giving way for a time he will satisfy the conscience till he gets it lulled to sleep faster than ever. Thus, he will stoop to conquer, retreat to draw his opponent into an ill position; allow his throne to shake so that he may reestablish his dominion permanently. Moreover, he thinks that by letting the man indulge in a little religion for a time, and then turn aside from it, he will make him permanently skeptical so that he will hold him fast by the iron chain of infidelity, and drag him down to hell with that hook in his jaws.

Now, after a time it appears that *the evil spirit returned*; he could find no rest for himself except in the hearts of the wicked, and therefore, he came back. There is no opposition to his entrance, the door is not locked—or if it is, he has the key. He comes in—there is no tenant, no man in possession—no other proprietor. He looks around and cries, “Here is my house. I left it when I took my walks abroad, and I have come back, and here it is ready for me.” In due time, the devil comes back to those persons who are reformed, but not renewed—who are changed, but not made new creatures in Christ Jesus. But what does the devil see? First of all, he sees the place to be *empty*; if it had been full, he could not have entered again; if Jesus Christ had been at the door, there would have been a very terrible struggle for a little time, but it would have ended in Satan being driven away in disgrace. But it is empty, and therefore, he quietly resumes his sway. The devil shouts his, “Halloal!” and

there is an echo through every room, but no intruder appears. "Is Christ here?" No answer. He goes outside and he looks at the lintel, for Christ's mark is sure to be there if Jesus is within. "No mark of blood on the post; Christ is not here," he says. "It is empty; I will make myself at home." If Jesus had been there, though He had been hidden in a closet, yet when He came out He would claim possession, and drive out the traitor and say, "Be gone! This is no place for you. I have bought it with My blood, and I mean to possess it forever." But it is empty, and so Satan fills it with stores of evil. The next thing the fiend notices is that it is swept—as one says, "Swept, but never *washed*." Sweeping takes away the loose dirt—washing takes away all the filth. O to be washed in Jesus' blood! Here is a man whose house is swept—the loose sins are gone; he is not a drunkard, there is a pledge over the mantelpiece. He is no longer lustful—he hates that sin—or says he does, which is as much as the devil wants him to do. The place is swept so tidy, so neat, you would not know him to be the same man as he used to be; and he himself is so proud to think he has got his house so clean, and he stands up at the threshold as he meets the devil with a, "Good morning," and he says "I am not as other men are, I am neither an extortioner, nor a drunkard; nor even as that Christian over yonder, who is not half what he ought to be—nor a fraction as consistent as I am."

And as the devil looks round and finds the place swept, he finds it *garnished*, too. The man has bought some pictures—he has not real faith, but he has a fine picture of it over the fireplace. He has no love to the cross of Christ, but he has a very handsome crucifix hanging on the wall. He has no graces of the Spirit, but he has a fine vase of flowers on the table—of other people's experiences, and other people's graces—and they smell tolerably sweet! There is a fireplace without fire, but there is one of the most handsome ornaments for the fireplace

that was ever bought for money. It is swept and garnished. Oh, the garnished people I have met!—garnished sometimes with almsgiving, at other times with longwinded prayers; garnished with the profession of zeal, and the pretense of reverence! You will find a zealous Protestant—oh, so zealous—who would go into fits at the sign of a cross, and yet will commit fornication! Do you think such a case impossible? I know such a case. You find persons shocked because another boiled a teakettle on a Sunday, or insured his life, or assisted at a bazaar, who will cheat and draw the eye teeth out of an orphan child, if they could get a sixpence by it! They are swept and garnished. Walk in, ladies and gentlemen! Did you ever see a house so delightfully furnished as this? How elegant—how tasteful! Just so; but men may be damned tastefully, and go to hell respectably just as well as they can in a vulgar and debauched fashion!

You see the whole, how it ends. Satan is very pleased to find the place as it is, and thinking that this is too good for one, he goes abroad and invites in seven of his friends worse than himself—for some devils are worse than others; and they come in and hold high holiday in the man's soul. What do we mean by that? Why, we mean that such persons do really become more wicked, more hardened, more ungodly than they were before they professed to be Christians! It is really a shocking thing that if you want to find a thoroughbred, out-and-out transgressor, you must find one who once made a profession of religion. When Satan wants a servant who will do anything and ask no questions, who will swallow camels as well as gnats, he finds one who once stood high in the Christian Church. If he can find one who used to sing Christ's song, that is the throat to sing the devil's song; if he can find one who once sat at the sacramental table, he will say, "This is the man to sit at the head of my banquets, and conduct my feasts for me." These

renegades, these traitors, these Ahithophels, these Judases, these men who have known the truth of God and have been once in a manner enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gifts and the powers of the world to come in a certain sense—and yet fall away—these become like salt that is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill—even men cast them out! They are trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots—wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Have I any such in this place, any who were once swept and garnished, into whom Satan has returned? My friend, from my soul I pity you! What will be your portion? No common hell will be yours! Remember, there are reserved places in the pit of hell, and those are reserved for such as you are. Read the letter of Jude, and you will there find that there are some for whom are reserved, “the blackness of darkness forever.”

That is your case, and this will be the aggravation of it—you sat at the Master’s table and you must now drink the cup of fire; you preached in Christ’s courts, but you must now give forth a sorrowful sermon concerning your own apostasy; you once sang God’s praises—you must now howl out the lament of the damned! You had a glimpse of heaven—you shall now have a dread insight into hell; you talked about eternal life, you shall now feel eternal death—plunged in waves of flame, never to rise again, never to hope, never even to die, for to die were bliss! How dreadful shall your case be! In this world seven times worse than before, but in the world to come, damned, *damned* with an awful emphasis which common sinners cannot know! I pray God that these truths may make us watchful, make us careful lest we be found hypocrites or self-deceived professors.

**III.** I turn to a much more pleasing duty, which is **TO TAKE UP THE SAVIOR’S DESCRIPTION OF TRUE CONVERSION.** “When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome

him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils.”

Now, observe here is a *“stronger than he.”* This is not the man, himself, the man is the house—the man is not as strong as the devil—who is this? This is Jesus Christ, who comes by His Spirit into the heart of man, and the Spirit of God is vastly superior to Satanic power, as much as the infinite Creator Himself must always be superior to the finite creature. He who made Satan knows how to lay at him with His sword, so as to cut Rahab and wound the dragon. It is not, you see, the result of the man’s free will—it is not the result of the devil’s free will, either. It is the result of a stronger than he coming into the soul. As soon as the stronger than he comes in, there is a conflict. *“He comes upon him,”* that is to say, He attacks him; and ah, how vehemently does Christ lay to at the great enemy of souls! One sword-cut cuts away the plume of pride; another blow takes away the comfort of sin; and another destroys the reigning power of sin. What a struggle there often is when man is worked upon by the Holy Spirit; with all the power of prayer, with all the might of faith, the poor soul struggles against Satan! Christ struggles with all the power of His blood, and the blessings of His Spirit, and yet we know in some cases the arch fiend has been allowed to hold out for days, for weeks, even for months because of the unbelief of the poor soul. “He could not do many mighty works there,” it is written, “because of their unbelief.” This fight will sometimes grow so hot that the soul will choose strangling rather than life, and yet the result of it is never in doubt, for notice in the text that the stronger than he overcomes at the last. Oh, well do I remember when the stronger than Satan overcame in my soul! Five years, more or less, was there a conflict; sometimes my proud heart would not yield to sovereign grace; at another time, a willful spirit would go astray after vanity; but at last, when Jesus showed His

wounds, and said to me, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," I could hold out no longer, and the evil spirit could resist no more; the wounds of Christ had wounded the old dragon, and the death of the Savior became the death of sin.

Oh, there are many of us who know what it is to be conquered, to be subdued by a power other than our own! And in every case, there must be this experience, or there is no real life. Dear hearer, if your religion grew in your own garden, it is a weed and good for nothing! If your grace springs up as the result of your own willing, your own acting, and your own seeking, it is good for nothing! *Christ must seek you!* It must be a power far above you—mightier than you, far stronger than you and the devil put together—which must deliver you from your sins.

As soon as ever the stronger man has conquered the enemy, what does He do? He takes the sword of rebellion, snaps it across His knee, and pulls the armor from the back of the unclean spirit. Prejudice, ignorance, hard-heartedness—all these are pulled off the old enemy. I think I see him—I think I see the Savior stripping him to his shame, and ejecting him from the heart with abhorrence. There, let him go among the dry places and again seek rest and find none. Happy day! Happy day for the palace which he once defiled when he is cast out, and cast out forever! Christ Jesus then proceeds to divide the spoil. "There is the man's heart, I will take that," He says, "That shall be a jewel in My crown. The man's love I will set as a jewel upon My arm forever. His memory, his judgment, his power of thought, utterance and working—these are all Mine," says Christ. He begins to divide the spoil. He puts the broad arrow of the King upon every room in the house, upon every piece of furniture. The garnishing He pulls out, "I will adorn it far better than this," He says. "There shall be no *pictures* of faith,

but faith; there shall be no ornament in yonder grate except the ornament of the glowing fire of fervid zeal; there shall be no borrowed flowers, but I will train round this window the sweet roses and jasmine of love, and peace of mind. I will wash, what was only swept, with My blood; I will make it white, and sweet, and clean; and I will strike the lintel, and the two side posts with the hyssop and with the blood mark—and then, the destroying angel, when he sweeps by, shall sheathe his sword—and the black fiend, when he would enter, shall see the mark there, and go back trembling to his accursed den.”

This is *conversion*, the other was only conviction! This is change of *heart*, the other was only change of life. I do trust, if you have been content with the former, you will now bestir yourselves, and never be satisfied without the latter—

“O sovereign grace, my heart subdue,  
I would be led in triumph, too;  
Drive the old dragon from his seat,  
With all his hellish crew.”

Sinner, cry to the stronger than you are to come and help you. You groan under your slavery—I am thankful for it! Cry to the Great Deliverer! He will come! He will come! Is there a conflict going on in you? Remember *faith* gets the victory! Look to Jesus—look to Jesus, and the battle is won! Cast your poor spirit upon Jesus. Now, burn that broom—it is of no use to go on sweeping! You need *washing*—washing with *blood*! Come, now, spare that money of yours with which you are going to buy garnishing—they are all rubbish! Buy no more; I counsel you buy of *Him* gold tried in the fire. Come to His precious blood, and be made really clean. Your church attendance, your chapel-goings, your prayers, your almsgivings, your fasting, your feelings, your good works are all nothing—so much dross

and dung—if you try to sweep and garnish your house with them. Cast them all away! Fly from your good works as you would from your bad ones! Do not expect to be saved by anything that you can feel that is good any more than you would expect to be saved by anything that you feel that is bad—

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good!”

My Lord Jesus, if You are passing by, traveling in the greatness of Your strength, come and show Your prowess! Turn aside, You heavenly Samson, and rend the lion in this vineyard! If You have dipped Your robes in the blood of Your foes, come dye them all again with the blood of my cruel sins! If You have trod the wine press of Jehovah's wrath, and crushed Your enemies, here is another of the accursed crew! Come and drag him out and crush him! Here is an Agag in my heart, come and hew him in pieces! Here is a dragon in my spirit, break, O break his head, and set me free from my old state of sin! Deliver me from my fierce enemy, and unto You shall be the praise, forever and ever. Amen.



## 614 “FOR CHRIST’S SAKE” – EPH. 4:32

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 12th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“For Christ’s sake.” — Ephesians 4:32

THIS IS the great argument of awakened sinners when they seek mercy at God’s hands. Once they could boast of their own righteousness; they could rest upon their feelings, their resolutions, their goodness of heart, or their prayers; but now that God the Holy Spirit has shown them what they are, and revealed to them the desperate evil of their hearts, they dare not offer any other plea than this—“For Christ’s sake.” They look, and there is no man to succor; they cast their eyes around, and there is no helper, and their heart knows neither peace nor hope till they behold the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then straightway their mouth is opened with arguments, and they can plead with God with prevailing reasons, saying, “For Christ’s sake, for Christ’s sake, have mercy upon me.” Indeed, beloved, this is the *only* argument which can prevail with God in prayer, whether the prayer comes from saint or sinner. It is true that God did not originally love us for Christ’s sake, for His electing love was sovereign and absolute—the Father loved us not *because* the Savior died—but the Savior *died* because the Father loved us from before the foundation of the world. Nevertheless, the only channel of communication between a loving Father and His elect people is the meritorious

and glorious person of Christ. The Father gives us no privilege except through His only-begotten, nor are we looked upon as accepted or acceptable except as we stand in and through our Lord Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, perfect in Christ Jesus.

I must use no other argument when I plead with God but the name of His dear Son, for this is the sum of all heavenly logic. Whatever covenant mercy I may wish for, this is the key which will unlock the storehouses of heaven; no other name will prevail with God to scatter His mercies among undeserving sinners. He who knows how to plant his foot on the solid foothold of, "For Christ's sake," needs not fear, like Jacob, to wrestle with the Angel of God; but if we forget this in our prayers, we have lost the muscle and sinew from the arm of prayer—we have snapped the spinal column by which the manhood of prayer is sustained erect—we have pulled down about our own ears the whole temple of supplication as Samson did the house of the Philistines. "For Christ's sake," this is the one unbuttressed pillar upon which all prayer must lean—take this away, and it comes down with a crash! Let this stand, and prayer stands like heaven—reaching upward, holding communion with the skies.

In two ways, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, we will read the words before us. *It is God's argument for mercy*—"For Christ's sake." *It is our reason for service*—"For Christ's sake."

**I. GOD'S ARGUMENT FOR MERCY.** He forgives us, "For Christ's sake."

Here let us first look at *the force of this motive*; and then, secondly, let us notice *some qualifications in it*, which may, through God's blessing, be the means of comforting seeking sinners who desire to find rest in and through Jesus Christ.

**1.** Let us consider *the force of this motive* by which God is moved to forgive sinners, "For Christ's sake." You know that if we do a thing for the sake of a person, several considerations

may work together to make our motive powerful, that we may be willing not only to do some things, but many things; no, all things, for the sake of the individual admired or beloved.

The first thing which will move us to do anything for another's sake is his person, with its various additions of position and character. The excellence of a man's person has often moved others to high enthusiasm, to the spending of their lives—yes, to the endurance of cruel deaths for his sake. In the day of battle, if the advancing column wavered for a single moment, Napoleon's presence made every man a hero. When Alexander led the army, there was not a man in all the Macedonian ranks who would have hesitated to lose his life in following him. For David's sake the three mighties broke through the host, at imminent peril of their lives, to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem. Some men have a charm about them which enthralls the souls of other men who are fascinated by them, and count it their highest delight to do them honor. There have been, in different ages, leaders, both warlike and religious, who have so entirely possessed the hearts of their followers, that no sacrifice was counted too great, no labor too severe. There is much to move the heart in the excellence of a person. How shall I, in a fitting manner, lead you to contemplate the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that His charms far exceed all human attractions as the sun outshines the stars? Yet this much I will be bold to say, that He is so glorious that even the God of heaven may well consent to do 10,000 things for His sake! Brethren, we believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, essential Deity. Jesus is no distinct God, separate from the Father, but, in a mysterious manner, He is one with the Father, so that the old Jewish watchword still stands true. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." And yet Jesus is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness.

Besides this, He, for us men, and for our salvation, took upon Himself the form and nature of man—became incarnate, as the virgin's Son, and, as such, lived a life of perfection, never sinning, always full of love and holy service, both to God and man. There He stands—by the eye of faith we may see Him—"God over all, blessed forever," and yet man, of the substance of His mother, He stands to plead before the eternal throne; Almighty God, all-perfect man. He wears upon His head a crown, for He is a Prince of the house of David, and His dominion is an everlasting dominion!

Upon His bosom glitters the bejeweled breastplate, for He is a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek, and over His shoulders hangs the mantle of prophecy, for He is a Prophet, and more than a prophet. Now, as He stands there, adored of angels, worshipped by cherubim and seraphim, having the keys of heaven, and earth, and hell, at His side—Master of winds and waves, Lord of providence, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, the King of kings, the Lord of lords—I wonder not that such a person should prevail with the Father, and that God, for His sake, should bestow innumerable blessings upon the unworthy for whom He pleads! He is the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely! His head is as much fine gold! His lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh! His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars! His mouth is most sweet—yes, He is altogether lovely—

"The whole creation can afford  
But some faint shadows of my Lord;  
Nature, to make her beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own.  
Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor heaven, His full resemblance bears;

His beauties we can never trace,  
Till we behold Him face to face.”

In the surpassing majesty of His person lies a part of the force of the plea.

A far greater power lies in near and dear *relationship*. The mother, whose son had been many years at sea, pined for him with all a mother's fondness; she was a widow, and her heart had but this one object left. One day there came to the cottage door a ragged sailor; he was limping on a crutch and seeking alms. He had been asking at several houses for a widow of such-and-such a name. He had now found her. She was glad to see a sailor, for never since her son had gone to sea, had she turned one away from her door, for her son's sake. The present visitor told her that he had served on the same ship with her beloved boy—that they had been wrecked together, and cast upon a barren shore—that her son had died in his arms, and that he had charged him with his dying breath to take his Bible to his mother. She would know by that sign that it was her son—and to charge her to receive his comrade affectionately and kindly for her son's sake. You may well conceive how the best of the house was set before the stranger! He was but a common sailor; there was nothing in him to recommend him; his weather-beaten cheeks told of service, but it was not service rendered to her—he had no claim *on her*, and yet there was bed and board and the widow's hearth for him. Why? Because she seemed to see in his eyes the picture of her son—and that book, the sure token of good faith, opened her heart and her house to the stranger. Relationship will frequently do far more than the mere excellence of the person.

Think, brethren—Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God! Our God had but one begotten Son, and that Son, the darling of His bosom. Oh, how the Father loves Him! It is not

possible for us to measure divine love, for we have no measuring line. Human love at best is only finite even when it reaches its very highest. When we plunge into the depths of human love, there is yet a bottom, but divine love has neither shore nor boundary. Little can we tell what *unity of essence* means. The divine persons are one in essence—one God. We cannot, therefore, conceive what affection must spring from this closest of all known unities. Oh, how Jehovah loves Him! And yet that dear Son of His, for our sakes left the starry throne of heaven, became a man, suffered, bled and died! And when we come to mercy's bar, bringing with us Christ's own promise, the eternal Father sees Jesus in our eyes—bids us welcome to mercy's table, and to mercy's house for the sake of Him who is His only-begotten Son.

Still I have only advanced to the border of my subject. The force of the words, "For Christ's sake," must be found deeper still, namely in *the worthiness of the person and of His acts*. Many peerages have been created in this realm which descend from generation to generation, with large estates, the gift of a generous nation, and why? Because this nation has received some signal benefits from one man, and has been content to ennoble his heirs forever for his sake. I do not think there was any error committed, when Marlborough or Wellington were lifted to the peerage—having saved their country in war, it was right that they should be honored in peace. And when, for the sake of the parents, perpetual estates were entailed upon their descendants, and honors in perpetuity conferred upon their sons, it was only acting according to the laws of gratitude. Let us think of what Jesus Christ has done, and let us understand how strong must be that plea—"For Jesus' sake." The law of God was violated; Jesus Christ came into the world and kept it—kept it so that out of the whole ten commandments, there is not one whose clamorous tongue can lay anything to His

charge. Here was a divine dilemma—God must be just, yet He willed to save His people. How could these two things meet? Where was the man who could break down the mountain which separated justice and mercy, so that they could kiss each other? God must punish sin, and yet He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious. How shall these two things agree? Forth came the priests, with their various sacrifices, but the slaughter of bullocks, and heifers, and rams, and he-goats could not make God just. What comparison could there be between rivers of blood of fed beasts, and the sin of man? But Jesus came—the great solution of the divine enigma—Jesus came—eternal God, but yet perfect man, and He bowed His head to the ignominious death of the cross! His hands were pierced! His feet were nailed—His soul was sorrowful, even unto death—

“Jesus, our Lord and God,  
Bore sin’s tremendous load.  
Praise His name!  
Tell what His arm has done,  
What spoils from death He won!  
Sing His great name alone.  
Worthy the Lamb!”

God was just—He punished human guilt in the person of man’s representative, Jesus of Nazareth. God is gracious—He accepts every believing sinner for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Think, then, of what Christ has done, and you will see the force of the argument. He has honored the law of God which man had dishonored, and has opened a way for God’s mercy which man’s sin had fast closed up. Oh, God, Your Son has brought back what He took not away—He has taken the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive He has delivered! Like

another David, He has snatched the sheep from the jaws of the lion, and delivered the lamb from the paws of the bear; like another Samson, He has slain Your enemies, and taken the gates of their strongholds upon His shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill. Every wound which He endured upon the cross, every stroke which He felt in Pilate's hall, every drop of blood which He sweat in Gethsemane strengthens the plea, "For Christ's sake."

Still, still I think I have not yet arrived at the force of the words. If *any stipulation has been made*, then the words, "For His sake," become more forcible—because they are backed by engagements, promises, and covenants. In Christ's case, solemn promises have been exchanged. There was a distinct engagement made between the Judge of men and the Redeemer of our souls, and the prophet Isaiah has published the engagement, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Yet again, "I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." And still further, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." There was a distinct transaction then of ancient date between the Father and the Son, in which the Son stipulated that He would bear the sin of His people. He was to be the Scapegoat for His people Israel; and then it was solemnly engaged on the part of the divine Judge of all the earth, that He would give Him the souls of the redeemed to be His portion forever.

Now, brethren, there is a strength in the plea, "For Christ's sake." Oh God, with reverence would we speak of You, but how could You be just if You did not save those for whom Jesus shed His precious blood? Beloved, we speak as unto honest men—would you, being men, first of all accept a surety



and a substitute, and then expect the debtor to pay the debt himself? Look at human governments—if a man were drafted into the army, and should find a substitute, does the law afterwards seize the man himself? And shall God be less just than man? Shall the Supreme King of heaven be less just than the kings of earth? If Christ has paid my debt, God's justice cannot demand payment of me! It cannot expect the same debt to be paid twice. Justice cannot demand payment—

“First at my bleeding surety's hands,  
And then again at mine.”

If Christ served in that dread warfare for me as my substitute, how can it be that after this I should myself be driven to the edge of the sword? Impossible! Beloved, see that scapegoat yonder? Israel's sins have been confessed upon it. The high priest has laid his hand on the victim's head, it is led away by the hand of a fit man; he sets it free; he watches it—it is out of sight. He climbs a rock, looks far away to the east, the west, the north, the south—he cannot see it. He waits awhile, looks with anxious eyes—it is gone! He comes back and tells the people of Israel that the sin has been typically carried away upon the scapegoat's head.

Now, Christ is the fulfillment of the scapegoat. Our sins were laid on Him—He is gone—gone where? “You shall seek Me, but you shall not find Me,” He says. He is gone into the desolate regions of the dead. The Scapegoat, Christ, has carried away into His own tomb, the sins of all His people forever. Now, was that a farce, or was it a reality? Did Christ take away sin, or not? If He did, then how can men be punished for sins which Jesus took away, for the sins for which Christ was punished? If He did not suffer for sin, then where is the deliverance for any soul born of Adam? Oh, you who receive

general redemption, you know not what you receive! You, who talk of a universal atonement which does not make atonement for all sin, know not what you affirm! But we who speak of a special atonement made for every soul that ever has believed or ever shall believe—we speak of something sure, certain, worthy of the soul's resting itself upon—since it does save every soul for which it was offered up! There remains only one other thought upon this point. It tends very much to strengthen the plea, "For Christ's sake," if it is well known that *it is the desire of the person who the gift should be granted*, and if, especially, that desire has been and is earnestly expressed. Oh how glad we ought to be to think that Christ, when we plead His name, never tells us that we are going too far and taking liberties! No, beloved, if I anxiously ask for mercy, Christ has asked for mercy for me long ago! There is never a blessing for which a believer pleads, but Christ pleads for it, too! "He ever lives to make intercession for us." Our supplications become *His* supplications, and our desires, when excited of the Spirit, are *His* desires. In heaven He points to His wounds, the mementoes of His grief, and He cries—"Father, for My sake grant this favor to these poor undeserving ones; give them blessings as You would give Me blessings; be kind and gracious to them, as You would be kind and tender towards Me." This makes the plea omnipotent. It is not possible but that it should mightily prevail with God.

2. Pausing a minute, let us enumerate *some few other qualifications of this plea by way of comfort to trembling seekers*. This motive, we may observe, is with God *a standing motive*; it cannot change. Suppose, poor sinner, that God offered to forgive for your own sake. Then, if at one time you were penitent and broken-hearted, there would be hope for you; but at another time, you might be bemoaning the hardness of your heart, and powerlessness to repent, and then there would be no motive

why God should bless you. But, you see, Christ is always as much worthy at one time as another, and therefore, God has the same reason for blessing you—a poor wandering soul today—as He can have had 20 years ago! And if you have grown gray in sin—if you have become like a dry piece of wood ready for the fire, yet this motive does not wear out, for it has the dew of its youth upon it. God, for Christ's sake, forgives little children, and for the same reason, He can forgive the man who has passed his threescore years and ten. As long as you are in this world, this is a standing reason for mercy.

Remember, again, that this is a *mighty reason*. It is not merely a reason why God should forgive little sins, or else it would be a slur upon Christ—as though He deserved but little. Can you tell how great your sin is? “Oh,” you say, “it is high as heaven, it is deep as hell!” Now, can you tell how great Christ's worthiness is? I will tell you that His worthiness is deeper than hell can be, and higher than heaven itself. What if your sin could reach from east to west, and from the highest star to the depth of the abyss, yet the worthiness of Christ, is a fullness which fills all in all, and therefore it would cover all your sins! Your sins, like Egypt's hosts, are many and mighty—Christ's worthiness is like the flood of the Red Sea—able to drown the whole, so that, not one of their host shall be left; they shall sink into the bottom like a stone. Your sins are like Noah's flood which drowned all mankind; Christ's worthiness is like Noah's ark which swims above the tide, and mounts higher as the flood grows deeper. The deeper your sin, the more is Christ's merit exalted above the heavens when Jehovah forgives you all your iniquities! Think not little of Christ! I would not have you think little of sin—but still think more of Christ. Sin is finite; it is the *creature's* act. Christ is infinite; He is omnipotent. Whatever then your sin may be, Christ is greater than your sin, and able to take it away.

Then, brethren, it is a most *clear and satisfactory*—I was about to say most *reasonable reason*—a motive which appeals to your own common sense! Can you not already see how God can be gracious to you for Christ's sake? We have heard of persons who have given money to beggars, to the poor; not because they deserved it, but because they would commemorate some deserving friend. On a certain day in the year, our Horticultural Gardens are opened free to the public. Why, why should they be opened free? What has the public done? Nothing. They receive the gift in commemoration of the good Prince Albert. Is not that a sensible reason? Yes. Every day in the year, the gates of heaven are opened free to sinners. Why? For Jesus Christ's sake! Is this not a most fitting reason? If God would glorify His Son, how could He do better than by saying, "For the sake of My dear Son, set the pearly gates of heaven wide open, and admit His chosen ones. See these myriads of spirits—they are all admitted to their throne of immortal glory for the sake of My dear Son. They are happy, but they are happy for His sake. They are holy, but they are holy for His sake." Casting their crowns at His feet, they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." You perceive at once that this reason appeals to common sense, and therefore I hope, dear Friends, you will lay hold of it.

Let me say, poor sinner, that it is a reason *applicable to your case*. If you can, think of any good and solid reason why God should forgive you! Turn them all over. You cannot see one! I know the time when I could not find half a reason why God should save me, but I could find 50,000 reasons why He should damn me! But when I see that, "For Christ's sake," O that is a reason; that is a *good* reason—it is a reason I can get hold of! Suppose me to be the blackest sinner out of hell, how it will glorify Christ if, for Christ's sake, the blackest sinner that ever

lived should be snatched from hell and taken to heaven for His sake! Suppose I have been a blasphemer; unchaste; an adulterer; a murderer—what then? “For Christ’s sake” the more sin I have, the more glorious will the merit of Christ seem to be, when, in opposition to all my unworthiness, it brings me pardon and eternal life, and takes me to the enjoyments of His right hand! Sinner, grasp this motive! I know where you have been—you have been raking about in that filthy dunghill of your own heart. You have been turning the filth over to find a jewel in it. You will never find one! The jewels which once belonged to mankind were all lost by our father, Adam. I know what you have been doing. You have been trying to be better in order to deserve well of God. Thus you thought you would manufacture a reason which should move the heart of God. Leave off this foolish work—come with nothing in your hands but Christ! When the Molossians were threatened by their king to be cut to pieces for their rebellion, they pleaded very hard, but no argument would touch his heart till, one day, one of their ambassadors saw his son in the palace. Catching him up in his arms, he took and laid him down before his father’s feet, and said, “For your son’s sake, have pity upon us.” Now, do this, sinner—take Christ in your arms and say, “For Christ’s sake.” The whole heart of the gospel lies here. All true theology is comprehended in this, “For Christ’s sake.” Substitution—saving the guilty through the innocent. Substitution—blessing the unworthy through the worthy. Try this precious plea, poor soul, and I will guarantee you that, before long, you shall find peace with God if you can understand the power of this argument!

I may close these reflections by observing that this is *the only motive*, the only motive which can ever move the heart of God. You may cry as long as you will, reform as much as you please, pray as earnestly as you like—but the gate of heaven will

never stir to your knocking till you plead, "For Jesus' sake!" There is the, "Open Sesame," which will make the gates of the city turn on their hinges; but if you have not this watchword, all your doings and almsgivings, and praying, and what not, will be but a heap of filth piled up against heaven's gate. Remember, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid," and that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but Jesus Christ, the righteous. Use that! Plead that, and you shall succeed with God!

**II. "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE," IS THE BELIEVER'S GREAT MOTIVE FOR SERVICE.** Two or three hints as to *what kind of service may be expected of us*; then *a little exhortation by way of stirring us up to do this service for Christ*.

1. We begin with a few hints as to what service is expected of us. One of the first things which every Christian should feel bound to do, "For Christ's sake," is to avenge His death. "Avenge His death?" asks one. "Upon whom?" Upon His murderers. "And who were they?" Our sins! Our SINS!—

"Each of our crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear."

The very thought of *sin* having put Jesus to death should make the Christian hate it with a terrible hatred. I do not wonder that the Highlanders bit their lips, and marched with awful determination and dread resolve of vengeance against the rebel Sepoys, when they remembered how the murdered women filled up the well of Cawnpore. Every man must have felt, then, that he was 20 men in one, for retribution, and when his arm smote, he wished to concentrate all the might of justice into each stroke of his sword. When I remember that my sins tore my Savior's body on the tree, took the crown from His head, and the comfort from His heart, and sent Him down into

the shades of death—I vow revenge against them. “O sin! Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against a stone!” Yes, doubly blessed is he who, like Samuel, shall hew the Agag of his sins in pieces before the Lord, and not spare so much as one single fault, or folly, or vice, because it slew the Savior! Be holy, be pure, be just—be you separate from sinners for Christ’s sake!

Then, next, the Christian is expected to *exalt his Master’s name*, and to do much to honor His memory, for Christ’s sake. You remember that queen, who, when her husband died, thought she could never honor him too much, and built a tomb so famous that though it was only named for him, it remains, to this day, the name of every splendid memorial—the mausoleum. Now let us feel that we cannot erect anything too famous for the honor of Christ—that our life will be well spent in making His name famous; let us pile up the unhewn stones of goodness, self-denial, kindness, virtue, grace—let us lay these one upon another, and build up a memorial for Jesus Christ so that whoever passes by may know that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him! Should we not, for His sake, care for the growth of His kingdom, and the welfare of His subjects? Ought we not to minister to the needs of His servants, and comfort the sorrows of His friends? If He has a poor brother anywhere, is it not at once an honor and a duty to aid him? As David cherished Mephibosheth, who was lame in his feet, for the sake of Jonathan, so should you and I look after every heavy-laden, faint-hearted Christian, for the sake of Jesus! Should we not be bearing one another’s burdens because Christ bore our burdens; weeping with them who weep because Jesus wept; helping those who ask our help because God has laid help upon one that is mighty, even our Redeemer?

And above all, “For Jesus’ sake,” should be a motive to fill us with *intense sympathy with Him*. He has many sheep, and some

of them are wandering—let us go after them, my brethren, for the Shepherd's sake. He has pieces of money which He has lost—let us sweep the house, and light our candle, and seek diligently till we find them, "For Jesus' sake." He has brethren who are playing the prodigal—let us seek to bring them back—"For Christ's sake." Let the soul of the poorest little street Arab; let the soul of the grossest scoundrel, and the most abandoned harlot, be very dear to us for Jesus' sake—let us care even for the obstinate and rebellious, for Jesus' sake. As you look at souls, imagine you see Jesus weeping over them; as you look at perishing sinners, imagine you see His blood spattered on them, and you will love them, "For Jesus' sake." Oh, brethren, you who are doing nothing for Christ—you who come here and listen to me, who sit at His table and take the bread and wine in remembrance of Him—what will you do when your Master comes, and you have to confess that you did *nothing* for Him, that your love was of such a sort that you never showed it—you talked of it—but you never gave to His cause, you never worked for His name? Away with such love as that! What do men think of it—a love that never shows itself in action? Why, they say, "Open rebuke is better than secret love of that kind." You had better have rebuked Christ than to have had a sneaking, miserable, untrue, unloving love to Him—a love so weak that it was never powerful enough to actuate you to a single deed of self-denial, of generosity, of heroism, or zeal! Oh, brethren, let it not be so with us any longer, but let us seek, by God's grace, that "For Jesus' sake," we may have a sympathy with Him in yearning over the souls of men, and endeavoring to bring them to a knowledge of His salvation!

2. *A few words, lastly, by way of exhortation* on this point, and I will not weary your attention by longer talk. Clear as the sound of a trumpet startling men from slumber, and bewitching as the sound of martial music to the soldier when he marches to the



conflict, ought to be the matchless melody of this word, “For Christ’s sake.” It ought to make men perform deeds which should fit them to rank with angels; it ought to bring out of every regenerate man, more than was ever forced from manhood by any other word, let it have what charm it might; it ought to make the least among us valiant as David, and David as the servant of the Lord. Think, my brethren, what mighty wonders other words have worked. *For philosophy’s sake* what have men not suffered? They have wasted their health over unhealthy furnaces, breathing noxious gases; they have worn out their days and their nights burning the midnight oil; they have spent their last farthing to acquire the secrets of nature! They have beggared themselves and their families, to unravel mysteries which have brought no more substantial reward, than the honor of learned approval and conscious power. The martyrs of science are innumerable. If someone would write their story, it would make a bright page in human history. Think again of what men have done *for discovery’s sake* by way of traveling. Take down the books of modern travelers, and you will be astounded at their zeal, their courage, and unselfishness! They have mocked the fever, have laughed at death, have left friends, and kindred, and the comfort of home; they have gone to inhospitable climates among more inhospitable men, have wandered about in weariness, wet with the rain, frozen with the cold, or burnt up with the heat! They have gone hungry, and thirsty, sick and weary—have journeyed on and on to find the source of a river or a passage through a frozen strait! When I think of such expeditions as those of Ross and Franklin, I marvel at, and reverence the endurance of humanity; how these bold men have braved old Boreas in his own ice-palace, and faced grim desolation in its own domain! The text, “Quit you like men,” gets a new emphasis when we think of these conquerors of famine, and cold and peril; and shall the

inquisitiveness of mankind prove a stronger motive than God-given love to Jesus? If so, shame upon us!

Think, again, of what men have done *for false religion's sake!* In years gone by the scimitar flashed from the Arab's sheath and the Arab's eyes flashed fire at the very name of Mohammed! For the one dogma, "God is God, and Mohammed is his Prophet," blood flowed in rivers, and fields were strewn with the slain, rejoicing to be slain because they dreamed that Paradise was to be found under the shadow of swords! Think how the heathen cast themselves before the car of Juggernaut to be crushed into a hideous mass of mangled flesh, and broken bones, and oozing blood for their god's sake! Their filthy, horrid god's sake! How many have given themselves to die by Gunga's stream? How many a woman has gone up to the funeral pile and thrown herself upon her husband's dead body, giving herself an offering to her cruel gods? I know not, what men have *not* suffered for the horrid deities, which they have chosen for themselves! Martyrs to fanaticism and deception are not a few, and shall the truth of God find us unready and unwilling to run risks for its sake? Review, my brethren, *the heroic struggles of the Lord's people*, and here we turn to the brightest page of the world's annals! Think of the suffering of God's people through the Maccabean war! How marvelous was their courage when Antiochus Epiphanes took the feeblest among the Jews, to force them to break the law, and found himself weak as water, before their dauntless resolve! Aged women and feeble children overcame the tyrant. Their tongues were torn out; they were sawn asunder; they were broiled on the fire; they were pierced with knives—but no kind of torture could subdue the indomitable spirit of God's chosen people! Think of the Christian heroism of the first centuries; remember Blandina tossed upon the horns of bulls and set in a red-hot iron chair; think of the martyrs given up to the lions in the amphitheatre

amidst the reviling of the Roman mob—dragged to their death at the heels of wild horses, or, like Marcus Arethusa, smeared with honey and stung to death by bees; and yet in which case did the enemy triumph? In none! They were more than conquerors through Him who loved them! And why? Because they did it all, “For Christ’s sake,” and Christ’s sake alone! Think of the cruelty which stained the snows of the Switzer’s Alps, and the grass of Piedmont’s Valleys blood-red with the murdered Waldenses and Albigenses, and honor the heroism of those who, in their deaths, counted not their lives dear to them “For Christ’s sake.” Walk this afternoon to your own Smithfield, and stand upon the sacred spot where the martyrs leaped into their chariot of fire, leaving their ashes on the ground, “For Jesus’ sake!” In Edinburgh, stand on the well-known stones consecrated with covenanting gore, where the axe and the hangman set free the spirits of men who rejoiced to suffer for Christ’s sake! Remember those fugitives, for Christ’s sake, “meeting in the glens and crags of Scotia’s every hill.” They were daunted by nothing—they dared everything “For Christ’s sake.” Think, too, of what missionaries have done, “For Christ’s sake.” With no weapon but the Bible, they have landed among cannibals, and have subdued them to the power of the gospel; with no hope of gain except in the reward which the Lord has reserved for every faithful one, they have gone where the most enterprising trader dared not go, passed through barriers impenetrable to the courage of men who sought after gold—but to be pierced by men who sought after souls. Think of the Moravians, first and choicest warriors for God. Think of them selling themselves for slaves that they might teach other slaves the liberty of the gospel—consenting to be confined in leper colonies for life—with the absolute certainty of rotting away piece-meal with leprosy and with diseases still fouler! Why? Only that they might save the leper’s

soul, and have an opportunity of teaching the poor diseased one the way by which his spirit might be made whole through Jesus, the great Physician! And what have you and I ever done? Oh, pigmies, dwarfs, sons of nobodies, our names will never be remembered. What have we done? Preached a few times, but with how little fire? Prayed at certain seasons, but with how little passion; talked now and then to sinners, but with what half-heartedness; given to the cause of Christ, but seldom given till we denied ourselves and made a real sacrifice; believed in God at times, but oh with what unbelief mixed with our faith; loved Christ, but with what cold, stolid hearts. "For Christ's sake." Do you feel the power of it? Then let it be like a rushing mighty wind to your soul, to sweep out the clouds of your worldliness and clear away the mists of sin! "For Christ's sake!" Be this the tongue of fire that shall sit on every one of you! "For Christ's sake!" Be this the divine rapture, the heavenly impulse to bear you aloft from earth, the divine Spirit that shall make us bold as lions and swift as eagles in our Lord's service! Fixed, fixed on God with a constancy that is not to be shaken, resolve to honor Him with a determination that is not to be turned aside, and pressing on with an ardor never to be wearied.

I cannot preach as I would on such a theme as this, but I leave it with you. How much do you owe to my Lord? Has He ever done anything for you? Has He forgiven your sins? Has He covered you with a robe of righteousness? Has He set your feet upon a rock? Has He established your goings? Has He prepared heaven for you? Has He prepared you for heaven? Has He written your name in His Book of Life? Has He given you countless blessings? Has He a store of mercies which eyes have not seen nor ears heard? Then do something for Christ worthy of His love. Wake up from natural sleepiness and this very day, before the sun goes down, do something in some way by which you shall prove that you feel the power of that divine

motive, “For Christ’s sake.” May God accept and bless you, dear friends, “For Jesus’ sake.” Amen.

“See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?  
His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads over His body on the tree;  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.  
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

# 615 HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE MERCY

## – GEN. 8:21

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 19th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart, I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake; although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.” — Genesis 8:21

PETER TELLS US that Noah’s ark and baptism are figures of salvation. He puts the two together as pictures of the way by which we are saved. Noah was not saved by the world’s being gradually reformed and restored to its primitive innocence, but a sentence of condemnation was pronounced, and death, burial, and resurrection ensued. Noah must go into the ark and become dead to the world; the floods must descend from heaven, and rise upward from their secret fountains beneath the earth, the ark must be submerged with many waters—here was burial. And then, after a time, Noah and his family must come out into a totally new world of resurrection life. It is the same in the figure of baptism. The person baptized, if he is already dead with Christ, is buried—not purified and improved—but buried beneath the waves; and when he rises, he professes that he enjoys newness of life. Baptism is setting forth just what Noah’s ark set forth—that salvation is by death

and burial. You must be dead to the world. The flesh must be dead with Christ, buried with Christ—not improved, not made better—but utterly put aside as unimprovable, as worthless, dead, a thing to be buried and to be forgotten. And we must come forth in resurrection life, feeling that above us there is a new heaven, and beneath us a new earth where righteousness dwells, seeing that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It would be very instructive to dwell upon each point of the resemblance between Noah's deliverance and the salvation of every elect soul. *Noah enters into the ark*—there is a time when we distinctly enter into Christ and become one with Him. *Noah was shut in the ark* so that he could never come out again till God should open the door; there is a time when every child of God is shut in—when faith and full assurance give him an evidence that he is indissolubly one with Christ Jesus; grasped in Christ's hand so that none can pluck him out, hidden in Christ's loins so that none can separate him from the love of God. *Then comes the flood*—there is a season in the Christian's experience when he discovers his own depravity; he is saved, he is in the ark, he is, however, still a sinner, still the subject of inbred lusts. Suddenly, all these corruptions break up—they beat upon his ark, they assail his faith, they endeavor, if possible, to drown his soul in sin, but he is not destroyed by them—for, by the grace of God, he is where other men are not; he is where he cannot be drowned by sin—he is in Christ Jesus! He mounts as the floods deepen; the more he feels the depth of his depravity, the more he admires the fullness of the atoning sacrifice! The more terrible the temptation, the more joyous is his consolation in Christ Jesus! And so he rises in holy communion towards his God. Then *the wind* comes—typical of the breath of the sacred Spirit by which the floods of corruption are calmed, and peace reigns within, and the soul sings, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*Then the tops of the mountains appear*—sanctification takes place upon a part of the man; there are some bright graces which glisten out of the general flood of corruption; there are some points of his new-born nature which delight him with their beauty. *His ark has grounded and settled*—he no longer floats, so to speak, tossed about with a struggling faith and contending unbelief—he feels that as Christ Jesus is forever seated firmly at the right hand of God, so he, in Christ Jesus, has entered into rest. The ark grounded on the top of Ararat—so does the believer's experience come to a settled condition; he is no more moved about with fears and questions, but rejoices in hope of the glory of God. *He sends forth his thoughts in search after evidence of his complete salvation*, and probably he sends out some of his own ignorant carnal expectations, just as Noah sent out the raven. These ignorant imaginations, of what the work of the Spirit is, go forth and they never return, because no unclean child of the old Adam can be a discernor of the new world. Then, he sends out the dove—holy desires, earnest prayers go to and fro; by and by they come back with a token for good, some choice mercy from the hand of God, an olive branch of assured peace, and the believer surely knows not only that he is in Christ, not only that he is grounded in Christ, but that all the waters are calmed, all sin is gone, all danger removed, all death destroyed! Then occurs a period where *God opens the door*; Christ had been as a sort of prison to the Christian up till then, the cross had been a burden, he did not rejoice in liberty; but God the Father now comes with the blessed Spirit and opens the door, and the believer is fully at liberty in the new world.

The saved soul's first act is, like Noah, to build an altar unto God and, as a priest, to offer sacrifice, which, as it rises to heaven, is accepted because it is a memorial of Christ. The Lord smells a sweet savor, and though the believing man is still full of sin and from his youth up has an evil imagination, yet he



hears the covenant voice which says, “I will no more curse, I will no more destroy.” He hears the covenant promise which confirms forever the faithfulness of God, and he rejoices to inherit, like Noah, a new world where righteousness dwells. I do not lay any stress upon these interpretations, but I know the apostle says concerning Hagar and Sarah, “which things are an allegory,” and I believe that the book of Genesis is a book of dispensational truth, and if it were rightly read, not by the eye of curiosity, but by the heart of the student who has been made wise to see the deep things of God, very much of divine and holy teaching would be discoverable in it.

But now, I come to the text itself. We have here, first, *a very sad and painful fact*, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” We have, secondly, *God’s most extraordinary reasoning*, “I will not again curse the ground for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil.” Then, thirdly, *we have some inferences less extraordinary but practical to ourselves from the text*.

I. To begin, then, with the text, we have here **A MOST PAINFUL FACT** that man’s nature is incurable—“The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”

You will remember, before the flood, in the fifth verse of the 6th chapter it is written, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only continually evil.” After the flood, it is just the same. The description in the 6th chapter belonged to the entire antediluvian race. You might have hoped that, after so terrible a judgment, when only a few— a picked and peculiar few—that is, eight, were saved by water, that then, as man began anew with a better stock, the old branches that were rotten being cut away—that now the nature of man would be improved. It is not one whit so; the same God who, looking at man, declared that his imagination was evil before the flood, pronounces the very same verdict upon them afterwards. Oh

God! How hopeless is human nature! How impossible is it that the carnal mind should be reconciled to God! How necessary is it that You should give us new hearts and right spirits, seeing that the old nature is so evil that even the floods of Your judgments cannot cure it of its evil imaginations! I would have you studiously notice the words used in both these passages—the antediluvian and the postdiluvian verdict of God. Look at the fifth verse of the 6th chapter—God saw sin in the sons of men, the descendants of Cain, not only outward sin that was great and multiplied, and cried to Him for vengeance—but still worse, He saw treachery and departure from God in *the sons of the chosen ones*—the sons of Seth had gone astray, also! The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and the two races became mingled so as to produce monsters of iniquity. But, worse than that, He saw that the thoughts of men’s hearts were evil—man could not think without being evil.

No, more, the substratum which underlies actual thought, unformed, unfashioned thought, the eggs, the embryos of thought, called here *the imagination of the thought*, the first conception, the infant motions of the soul—all these, God found to be evil. But observe, He says they were, “only evil.” Not one trace of good! No gold amidst the dross, no light amidst the darkness—they were, “*only evil*.” And then, He adds that word, “continually.” What? Never any repentance; never any yearning towards the right; no pure drops of holiness now and then? No, never! “*Every* imagination”—notice that word. The whole verse is most clear, a broom that sweeps man clean of all boasted good. “Every imagination”—when he was at his best, when he stood at God’s altar, when he tried to be right, even then, his thoughts had evil in them! Dr. Dick says, “All man’s thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes are evil, expressly or by implication, because the subject of them is avowedly sinful, or because they do not proceed from a holy

principle, and are not directed to a proper end. It is not occasionally that the human soul is thus under the influence of depravity; but this is its *habit* and *state*. It seems impossible to construct a sentence which should more distinctly express its *total* corruption than this.” Look at this other passage, which is our text; you will see it, gives a different phase of the same evil, but it does not abate one jot or tittle of it—it is still, “The imagination of man’s heart,” it is still the inward character, the core, the pith, the marrow of mankind which God is dealing with. It is not the stream which comes from man that is foul, but the fountain of man, the innermost source of the fountain—the imagination of his heart is evil—and we are told here, what we are not told in the other text, that his thoughts are evil *from his youth*, that is to say, from his earliest childhood; and it would not be evil from his childhood in every case if there were not certain seeds of evil sown before that, and therefore, we can go further, and in the words of Holy Scripture, we can confess with sorrowful truthfulness—“Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” From the very earliest imaginable period in which human nature exists, it is a defiled, tainted thing and only worthy of God’s utter abhorrence! And were it not that He smells a sweet savor in the sacrifice of Christ, He would say, as He did say in the 6th chapter, “He repented that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.”

I have thus brought out this painful fact distinctly, I hope, before you. It is true both before and after the flood. If you need any proof of its being true *now*, turn to the scores of passages of Scripture which all prove it. I think, however, if our time were limited, as it is this morning, I would prefer to mention the 3rd chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. It is the most sweeping description of the universality of human

depravity that could possibly have been penned. I will read from the 9th to the 19th verse—“What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues have they used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things so ever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and the entire world may become guilty before God.”

Jonathan Edwards says upon this passage, “If the words which the apostle uses here (Rom 3:10-19) do not most fully and determinately signify a universality, no words ever used in the Bible, or elsewhere, are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in the Scripture, from the beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms, so strongly, and emphatically, and carefully formulated to express the most perfect and absolute universality, or any place to be compared to it. What instance is there in the Scriptures, or indeed any other writing, when the meaning is only the much greater part, where this meaning is signified in such a manner by repeating such expressions, ‘They are all,’ ‘They are all together,’ ‘every one,’ ‘all the world;’ joined to multiplied negative terms, to show the universality to be without exception; saying, ‘There is no flesh,’ ‘There is none, there is none, there is none, there is none,’ four times over; besides the addition of, ‘No, not one,’ ‘No, not one,’ once and

again. . . So that if this matter [universal depravity] is not here set forth plainly, expressly, and fully, it must be because no words can do it; and it is not in the power of language, or any manner of terms and phrases, however contrived and heaped one upon another, determinately to signify any such thing.”

Let us remember *the confessions of God's people*. You never heard a saint on his knees yet tell the Lord that he had a good nature, that he did not need renewing. Saints, as they grow in divine grace, are made to feel more and more acutely the evil of their old nature. You will find that those who are most like Christ have the deepest knowledge of their own depravity, and are most humble while they confess their sinfulness. Those men who know not their own hearts may be able to boast, but that is simple ignorance, for if you will take down the biographies of any persons esteemed among us for holiness, and for knowledge in the things of God, you will find them frequently crying out under a sense of inward carnality and sin. If I may return to Scripture, I cannot help quoting David, “Behold I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” It is a most villainous thing that some persons try to slander David's mother, and to suppose that there was something irregular about his birth which made him speak as he has done, whereas, there cannot be the slightest imputation upon that admirable woman. David himself speaks of her with intense respect, and says, “Save the son of Your handmaid,” as though he felt it no discredit to be the son of such a woman. She was, doubtless, one of the excellent of the earth, and yet, excellent as she was, it could not but be otherwise that in sin her son was conceived. Let us not at all attempt to escape from the force of what David says. He is using no exaggerated expressions; there is no indication of hyperbole throughout the whole Psalm; he is a broken-hearted man on his knees; he is confessing his own sin with Bathsheba, and is not likely either to bring any accusation

against his own *mother* or to use exaggerated terms! Beloved it is so; we, all of us, the best of us, still have to bear about with us the marks of the unclean thing from which we sprang.

Take Paul again—was there ever a man who knew more of what sanctity of nature means, or who was brought nearer to the image of Christ? Yet he cries out, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” He finds no joy until he can say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Still, I think we have another proof, namely, *our own observation*. We have lived long enough to observe with our own eyes, and by our reading that sin is the universal disease of manhood. Is it not certain, according to observation, that man’s heart is evil? They used to tell pretty tales about the charming innocence of men dwelling in the wooded bowers of primeval forests, untainted by the vices of civilization, unpolluted by the inventions of commerce and art. The woods of America were searched, and no such sweet babes of grace were discovered. The ferocity and cruelty of the Indians justify my saying that they were hateful and hating one another. The blood-red tomahawk might have been emblazoned as the red man’s coat of arms, and his eyes glaring with revenge might be taken as the true index of his character. Travelers have penetrated of late into the center of Africa, where we may expect to see nature in its primitive excellence, and what is the report that is brought back to us? Why, it is nature in its primitive devilry that is all! Let such abominable tyrants as Messrs. Grant and Speke describe to us, indicate to us what man is when he is left in his primeval state, untainted by civilization—he is simply a greater devil—he is naked and he is not ashamed; in this, only, is he like our unfallen parents. Again, try the mildest races. There is the mild Hindu. You look into his gentle face, and you cannot suppose him capable of cruelty. Trust well that mild Hindu, subdued by British arms so speedily, and so cheerfully bowing

his neck to the yoke; but you may as well trust the sleek and cunning tiger from his jungle—let the story of the Sepoy rebellion of a few years ago show us the gentleness of the mild Hindu! Live among the mild Hindu, and if you dare read the 1st chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, remember that it is a decent account of what, in ordinary life, is practiced among the Hindu, but which could not be more clearly described, because the mouth of modesty would refuse to speak it, and the ears of modesty would tingle at the hearing of it. The life of the most respectable Hindu is tainted with vices too vile to mention.

“Yes, but still,” says one, “we must look at *children*, because sin may enter into us through education— let us look at children.” Very well, I am willing to look at children, and I am unwilling that anybody should say a word that is harsh or severe against children's nature. But I will say that any man who declares children to be born perfect never was a father! If he would only watch his own child—not merely when that child has its toys around it, and is pleased and happy, but when its little temper is ruffled—he would soon perceive evil nestling there. Your child without evil; you without eyes, you mean! If you will only look and listen, you will soon discover, if no other fault, this one, “They go astray from the womb, speaking lies.” One of the earliest vices of children, which needs to be corrected with most constant and wise rigor, is the tendency towards falsehood. It is all very pretty for people to talk about the innocence of children, but I would like them to have to keep one of the nursery schools like those at Manchester, where the children are left while the mothers are at work in the mills, and they would soon discover in their pulling one another's hair, and scratching at one another's eyes, and such like pretty little diversions and innocent freaks, that they are not altogether the sweet babes of innocence they are supposed to

be! “Well,” says one, “still, human nature may have some spiritual good in it—look at the men who make illustrious the page of history—look at Socrates, for instance—religion did nothing for Socrates, but yet what a fine character he was.” Who told you that? I will venture to say that the philosopher’s character would not bear description in a decent assembly. We know from undoubted authority that the purest philosophers at times indulged in bestiality and filth. Solon and Socrates were no exceptions. When infidels hold up these sages as being such patterns of what human nature might become, they have history dead against them.

“The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. There is no soundness in it.” And this, be it remembered, is without an exception in the long history of humanity, say 6,000 years. There is not one that has escaped contamination, not one who has come into the world clean, not one who dares go before his Maker’s bar and say, “Great God, I have never sinned, but have kept Your law from my youth up.”

**II.** Now, I want you to notice, in the second place, a most extraordinary thing—when I noticed it yesterday, I was surprised and overwhelmed with grateful admiration—that is, **GOD’S EXTRAORDINARY REASONING.**

Good reasoning, but most extraordinary. He says, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Strange logic! In the 6th chapter, He said man was evil, and therefore, He destroyed him. In the 8th chapter, He says man is evil from his youth, and therefore, He will *not* destroy him! Strange reasoning! Strange reasoning to be accounted for by the little circumstance in the beginning of the verse; “The Lord smelled a sweet savor.” There was a sacrifice there—that makes all the difference! When God looks on sin apart from sacrifice, justice says, “Destroy! Destroy! Smite! Curse! Destroy!” But when there is



a sacrifice, God looks on sin with eyes of mercy, and though justice says, “Destroy,” He says, “No, I have punished My dear Son; I have punished Him, and will spare the sinner.” Mercy looks to see if she cannot find some loophole, something that she can make into an excuse why she may spare mankind. Is then natural depravity an excuse for sin? Does God use it as such? No, beloved—that our heart is vile is rather an aggravation of the vileness of our action than any excuse for it. Yet there is this one thing—we are born sinners, and God sees there, I will say, a sort of loophole. Rightly upon the terms of justice, there is no conceivable reason why He should have mercy upon us, but divine grace makes and invents a reason. O may I be helped, while I try to show you where I think the ground of mercy here lies! Devils fell separately; we have every reason to believe that every fallen angel sinned on his own account, and fell, and it is very likely that on this account there was no possibility, as we know of, of their restoration—every separate fallen spirit was given up forever to chains, and darkness, and flames of fire.

But men! Men did not fall separately and individually. Our case is a somewhat different one from that of fallen angels. We all of us fell without our own consent, without having, in fact, any finger in it actually. We fell federally in our covenant head—it is in consequence of our falling in Adam, that our heart becomes evil from our youth. Now, it looks to me as if God’s mercy caught that. He seemed to say, “My creatures have, according to My arrangement of federation, fallen representatively; then I can *save* them representatively. They perished in one, Adam, I will save them in another. They fell not by their own overt act, though, indeed, their own overt acts have added to this and deserve My wrath, but their first fall was not through themselves; they are sinful from their very infancy. Therefore, He says, “I will deliver them by another as they fell

by another.” I do not know whether I can make it clear. I do not think that this was any reason before the bar of justice why God should save us, for I believe that He might justly have condemned the whole race of Adam on account of Adam’s sin and their own guilt, but I do think that this was a blessed loophole through which His mercy could, as it were, come fairly to the sons of men. “There,” He says, “I made them not distinct individuals but a race; they fell as a race, they shall rise as an elect race—‘As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’ ‘As by the transgression of one many were made sinners, so by the righteousness of one shall many be made righteous.’” I think you see the drift of it, then. Man’s being sinful, is in the logic of justice, a reason for punishment. Man’s being sinful from his youth by inheritance from his federal head becomes, through mercy, a reason why sovereign grace should light upon men while fallen angels are left to perish forever. Oh, I bless God that I did not fall first of all myself! I do bless the day, now, that I fell in Adam, for it may be if I had never fallen in Adam, I would have fallen in myself, and then, I would have been, like fallen angels, shut out forever from the presence of God, and in the flames of hell! One of the old divines used to say of Adam’s sin, “*Beata culpa*”—“Happy fault!” I dare not say that, but in one sense I will say, blessed fall that renders it possible for me to rise! Blessed way of ruin which renders it possible for the blessed way of salvation to be brought about—salvation by substitution! Salvation by sacrifice! Salvation by a new covenant Head, who for us is offered up that God may smell a sweet savor, and may deliver us!

I hope nobody will misconstrue what I have said, and make out that I teach that human depravity is an *excuse* for sin—God forbid! It is only in the eyes of divine grace that it becomes the door of mercy. You know, if your child has offended you, you do not want to chastise him, and yet you feel he deserves it.

How you do try, if you are a loving parent, to find some reason why you may let him go. There is no reason—you know that; if you deal with him in terms of justice, there is no reason why, having sinned, he should not smart for it; but you keep casting about for an excuse—perhaps it is his mother's birthday, and you let him off for that. Or else there was some little circumstance which softened the offense for which you may have him excused. I do not know whether the story is true, but it is said of Queen Victoria when she was just queen—just a girl—she was asked to sign a death warrant for a person who, by court martial, had been condemned to die. It is told that she said to the Duke, “Cannot you find any reason why this man should be pardoned?” The Duke said, “No, it was a very great offense; he ought to be punished.” “But was he a good soldier?” The Duke said he was a shamefully bad soldier, had always been noted as a bad soldier. “Well, cannot you invent for me any reason?” “Well,” he said, “I have every reason to believe from testimony that he was a good man as a man, although a bad soldier.” “That will do,” she said, and she wrote across the warrant, “pardoned”—not because the man deserved it—but because she wanted a reason for having mercy. So my God seems to look upon man, and after He has looked him through and through, and cannot see anything, at last He says, “He is evil from his youth,” and he writes, “Pardoned.” He smells the sweet savor first, and His heart is turned towards the poor rebel; then He turns to him with mercy and blesses him.

**III.** But now, thirdly, by your leave and patience, I shall have to lead you to a few inferences from the doctrine of the depravity of man. If the heart is so evil, then *it is impossible for us to enter heaven as we are*. We cannot suppose that those holy gates shall enclose those whose imaginations and thoughts are evil, and evil continually. No, if that is the place into which nothing shall enter that defiles, then, no man, being what he was in his

first birth, can ever stand there. Another step; then, *it is quite clear that if I am to enter heaven, no outward reform will ever do*, for if I wash my face, that does not change my *heart*; and if I give up all my outward sins, and become outwardly what I ought to be, yet still, if it is true that my heart is the villainous thing which Scripture says it is, then my outward reformation cannot touch that, and I am still shut out of heaven. If inside that cup and platter there is all this filthiness, I may cleanse the outside, but I have not touched that which will shut me out of heaven. I go, then, a little farther and I observe that *I must have a new nature*—not new practice only, but a new nature—not new thoughts or new words, but a new nature so as to become a totally new man. And when I draw the inference, I have Scripture to back me at once, for what does Jesus say to Nicodemus? “You must be born again.” But what is to be born again? To my first birth, I owe all I am by nature; I must get a *second* birth to which I am to owe all I am as I enter heaven. Multitudes of persons have been saying, “What is regeneration?” Here they have been writing hundreds of pamphlets, and no two of them agree upon what regeneration is except that they say that a man may be regenerated and not converted. Here is an extraordinary thing! An unconverted man who is regenerated? One who is an enemy to God, and yet he has in himself a new nature? He has been born-again, and yet is not converted to God? What? A regeneration that does not convert; regeneration, in fact, that leaves men just where they were before?

But to every babe in Christ the word, “regenerate,” is as plain as possible—he needs no definition, no description. “To be born again? Why,” he says, “I comprehend that it is to be made over again, a new creature in Christ Jesus! My first birth makes me a creature—my second birth makes me a *new* creature, and I become what I never was before.” I must remember that what is needed in me is not to bring out and

develop what is good in me, for, according to God's Word in the 6th of Genesis, there is *nothing* good, it is only evil! Grace does not enter to educate the germs of holiness within me, for there is no germ of good in man at all—he is “evil continually”—and *every* imagination is “only evil.” I must, then, die to sin! My old nature must be slain, it cannot be mended! It is too bad, too rotten to be patched up—that must die. By the death of Jesus, it must be destroyed; it must be buried with Christ, and I must rise in resurrection life to conformity with my Lord Jesus. Well then, advancing one step further—it is clear if I must be this before I can enter heaven, that *I cannot give myself a new nature*. A crab tree cannot transform itself into an apple tree! If I am a wolf, I cannot make myself a sheep. Water can rise to its own proper level, but it cannot go beyond it without pressure. I must have, then, something worked in me more than I can work in myself, and this, indeed, is good Scriptural doctrine. “That which is born of the flesh”—what is it? When the flesh has done its very best, what is it?—“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”—it is filthy to begin with, and filth comes of it—only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: marvel not that I said unto you you must be born again.”

My soul must come under the hand of the Spirit; just as a piece of clay is on the potter's wheel and is made to revolve and is touched by the fingers of the potter and molded into what he wishes it to be, so must I lie passively in the hands of the Spirit of God, and He must work in me to will and to do of His own good pleasure. And then, I shall begin to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, but never, never till then! I must have more than nature can give me, more than my mother gave me, more than my father gave me, more than flesh and blood can produce under the most favorable circumstances. I must have the Spirit of God from heaven. Then comes this inquiry, “Have I received it? What is the best evidence of it?”

The best evidence of it is this—am I resting upon Christ Jesus, alone, for salvation? You generally find on potters' vessels that there is a certain mark so that you can know who made them. I need to know whether I am a vessel fit for the Master's use, molded by His hands, and fashioned by His Spirit. Now, every single vessel that comes out of God's hands has a cross on it. Have you the cross on you? Are you resting upon Christ's bloody atonement made on Calvary? Is He to your soul your one Rock of Refuge—your one only hope? Can you say this morning—

“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your cross I cling—  
Naked, come to You for dress;  
Helpless, look to You for grace;  
Black, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”?

Then, my brethren, you have a new heart and a right spirit! You are a new creature in Christ Jesus, for simple faith in Christ is what the old Adam never could attain! A simple faith in Jesus is the great, sure mark of a work of the Holy Spirit in your soul by which you are made to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Do you take Him to be God's anointed to you? Do you trust yourself to Him to plead for you, to work for you, to fulfill the law for you, to offer atonement for you? If so, if Jesus is the Christ to you—you are born of God. The Spirit which is in you now will drive out the old nature, slay it utterly, cut it up root and branch, and you shall one day bear the image of the heavenly, even as you have till now borne the image of the earthly. May God bless these words of mine to your souls' good.

“Eternal Spirit, we confess  
And sing the wonders of Your grace!  
Your power conveys our blessings down  
From God the Father, and the Son.  
Enlightened by Your heavenly ray,  
Our shades and darkness turn to day.  
Your inward teachings make us know  
Our danger, and our refuge, too.  
Your power and glory works within,  
And breaks the chains of reigning sin,  
Does our imperious lusts subdue,  
And forms our wretched hearts anew.  
The troubled conscience knows Your voice,  
Your cheering Words awake our joys;  
Your Words allay the stormy wind,  
And calm the surges of the mind.”

## **616 THE SPECIAL CALL AND THE UNFAILING RESULT – I COR. 1:9**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Evening, February 19th, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the  
fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” — I Corinthians  
1:9**

AS I LOOK round upon this large church, numbering far above 2,000 members, my soul is often cast down within me. Yes, I am brought into the lowest depths of anxiety. Who is sufficient for these things? To order and distribute its sacred offices aright, to govern with discretion, to exercise discipline with prudence, to hide a strong hand, and to show at all times a loving heart—such thoughts roll in, wave after wave, till they threaten to overwhelm the mind. And then, at last to render unto the Master an account according to my earnest expectation, and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed; to be saluted of my God at His coming as a faithful and wise servant who has given to His household meat in due season; to be approved as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, not having “shunned to declare the whole counsel of God,” as well to those who did forbear as to those who did hear—if such aims do sometimes wind up one’s nerves to extraordinary energy, they verily make the heart palpitate at other times with the fear that haunts, and the solemnity that awes our soul. Well,



well could I be content to renounce so tremendous a charge if it were possible. This, however, is always the most painful qualm that troubles me. Will all these people hold on their way? They have professed to be converted; many of them have come out from the world, and for several years their lives have been distinguished by all virtues; these hands have baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and so far there appears reasonable evidence that the Spirit of God has set His seal to their being His genuine work, by maintaining them in the truth of God and holiness; but will they persevere? Will they hold on?

When the world is so full of temptations, in the midst of this age of sham, when godliness, when true godliness is as much hated as ever it was, and when spiritual religion is as great a mystery as it was to the sages of Areopagus in the days of Paul—will these men and women, especially the younger ones of them—will they all be found faithful, or will they disgrace the cause? Will they stain the shield of Christ? Will they turn their backs in the day of battle, and prove unfaithful cowards, traitors to our Lord and Master? Such a text as this, then, is refreshing, indeed; it comes so softly into one's ear, and breathes such gentle music, because it gives the comfort which just meets the difficulty. Yes, yes, they will hold on their way! There may be some who will go out from us because they were not of us—for if they were of us, doubtless they would have continued with us—but still the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, "The Lord knows them who are His." Yes, they shall stand, for God is faithful, who has called them unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

Well, now, dear brethren, have you not the same sort of trouble rising in your own minds? You look within, you think you see what divine grace has done for you; you feel as you never did feel before conversion. The things you once hated

you now love and what you once loved you now hate. You feel that there has been a radical change in you—one that nature could not effect, and your spirit is very glad in the prospect of what this will all lead to—"the rest which remains for the people of God," and the crown of everlasting life that fades not away. But here comes in this awkward, "But"—you see so much corruption within; you feel so much weakness which aids and abets this corruption; you foresee so many trials awaiting you, that the pale shadow of despondency falls on your heart, and fitful doubts and questions vex your brain. You have no sooner overcome one adversary than you are attacked by another, and sometimes the evil spirit howls in your ear, "God has forsaken you; now it is all over with you!" And you are ready to lie down and die in despair, saying, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; I shall never see His face with joy." To you, also, my text comes like a whisper from heaven—"God is faithful," who has called you, "unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ."

My drift this evening will be, while reminding you of your calling and of your fellowship, to comfort your hearts with regard to your perseverance. He is able to confirm and keep you even to the end, and He will do it! He will present you blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ for this very reason—that He has called you to fellowship with Him. What shall we say, then? First, *I want to refresh your memories with your calling*; secondly, *I want to make you exercise your fellowship*; and, thirdly, *I want you to perceive your security*.

**I. Beloved brethren in Christ, LET ME REFRESH YOUR MEMORIES WITH YOUR CALLING.**

Was there not a day, the mementoes of which you fondly cherish, when you were called from death unto life? Fly back now to the day and hour if you can and, if not, light upon the season thereabouts when the great transaction took place, in

which you were made Christ's forever, by the voluntary surrender of yourself to Him. In looking back, does it not strike you that your calling must have been of divine origin? The text says, "God called you"—does not your experience prove the same? We thought, perhaps, as the season transpired, that we had had no other call than that which came in the word that was addressed to us through our godly parents, through our Bibles, through the good books that we read; yet we perceive, in looking back, as the crisis passes before us in review, that none of these things could have ever produced the effect which has been taking place in us. Did we not read the same books years before? But they never touched a chord in our hearts; we listened to the same minstrel, it may be, scores of times; but he never could strike a spark into our dark natures! We had our convictions before this, but they were the mere disquietudes of natural conscience, which died away like the morning's frost, when the sun rises and scatters it all. Therefore we conclude that this time it must have been something special, and we think every man that has experienced it will say at once, "Yes, I see the finger of God in this; I am absolutely certain it was not moral persuasion; it was not the oratory of the preacher; it was not the earnestness, even, of my pleading teacher or friend, but the hand of God, as clear in my conversion as in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And, being so, beloved, do you not notice at once how irresistible that call was? Oh, we had been called scores of times before, but we always turned a deaf ear! I can say earnestly that I had been dragged to the cross of Christ before, and yet I would not go.

It was with me as the old proverb has it, "One man may lead a horse to water, but 20 cannot make him drink." How many times was I lead to the water, brought to the foot of the cross, pointed to Christ, pleaded with to look to Him, urged to put my trust in Him, but I would not—I preferred the things

of this world, and I would gladly have followed the devices of my own heart, my own willingness, and works, and judging, rather than yield to the will, and wisdom, and kindness of God! But when this particular call came, did you struggle against it? Perhaps you did, but you had more than your match. Oh, the divine influence, when you threw down your sword, and said, “Great God, I yield; I know not how it is, but I feel sweet yearnings within; my soul relents; I can be Your enemy no more; Your love has conquered me, and made me powerless to resist. You have whispered something in my ear; I know not how You did it, but ‘tis there, and I surrender at discretion. Do what You will with me, only allow me to know Yourself, that I may be saved.”

How gracious that calling must have been since it came to you from God; came to you irresistibly, and came to you with such personal demonstration! What grace was here! What was there in you to suggest a motive why God should call you? Oh, beloved, we can hardly ask you that question without tears rising in our own eyes—

“What was there in us that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?  
’Twas even so, Father! we ever must sing,  
‘Because it seemed good in Your sight.’”

Some of you were drunks, were profane, and were injurious. Many of you cared neither for God nor man. How often have you mocked at God’s Word! How frequently have you despised God’s ministers! How constantly has the holy name of the Most High been used in a flippant, if not in a profane manner by you! And yet, for all that, He fixed His eyes upon you, and would not withdraw them; and when you spurned the divine grace that would have saved you, still He

followed you, determined to save, till at last, in the appointed time, He got the grasp of you, and would not let you go until He had made you His friend, turned your heart to love Him, and made your spirit obedient to His grace!

I think, throughout eternity, if we had this problem to solve—"Why did He call *me*?"—we should still go on making wrong guesses, but we could never arrive at the right conclusion, unless we should say, once and for all, "I do not know." He did as He willed. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. And here let me say, if these things are so, oh should not this calling of ours tonight evoke our most intense gratitude, our most earnest love? Oh, if He had not called you, where had you been tonight? You shall sit tonight at the Lord's table—where would you have been but for divine grace? To repeat the old saying of John Bradford when he saw a cartful of men going off to Tyburn to be hanged, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." When you see the swearer in the street, or the drunkard rolling home at night—there are you, there am I—but for the grace of God! Who am I—what would I have been if the Lord, in mercy, had not stopped me in my mad career! I know there are some of us who can remember the old story of Rowland Hill, when a good Scotchman called to see him, and without saying a word, sat still for some five minutes, looking into the good old gentleman's face. At last Rowland Hill asked him what engaged his attention. He said, "I was looking at the lines of your face." Well, what do you make of them? "Why," said he, "that if the grace of God hadn't been in you, you would have been the biggest rascal living!" And some of us feel just that—that if it had not been for the grace of God, we would have been out-and-out ringleaders in every kind of infamy and sin. I know for myself I can never do things by halves. If I had served Baal, I

would have built him an altar, and made victims smoke upon it day and night. And if we serve God zealously and earnestly, we have the more reason to be humble and to lay low in the dust; for that very zeal of spirit would have been turned to the very worst account unless divine grace had been pleased to transform us. Why, there are some people in the world who seem too dull to do any good or hurt, and they have reason to be thankful if they are converted, but still not that reason that others have, who, if they did mischief, would do it with both hands, and if they do anything for God, must do it with all their might. This was a kind and gracious call, when we consider what we might have been.

Stand up now, believer, and look at this, and remember the grace of this call when you consider what you are. Why, man, tonight, what are you: A pardoned sinner—not a sin against you in God's book? What are you?—A justified person—the righteousness of Christ girds you—even the eyes of God cannot see a spot in you! You are in Christ all fair; there is no spot in you—justified freely by His grace—roll that thought under your tongue as a sweet morsel. What are you tonight? You are a child of God, an adopted heir of heaven, joint heir with Christ; you are accepted in the Beloved, and very precious to Jehovah, Himself. What are you? You are an heir of immortality. Heaven is your certain inheritance. Oh, I wish you could believe this! You who are Christians, and know this to be true, I wish you could realize it—that within ten minutes you may be in heaven with Christ, and that within a few years you *will* be there, that eternal life *is* yours—not *maybe*, not *perhaps*—but *is*, yours tonight, and you have but to heave one gentle sigh, and the dust is left behind, and the spirit waves the palm and wears the crown, and sings the eternal hymn before the throne of God! God has called us; let us look back upon the time of our calling, and if some such thoughts as these should rise in

our minds, they will not be unprofitable. They will fill your souls with grateful joy in retracing the steps by which you have been led; they will put courage into your souls in realizing the grace by which you now stand; they will clear the mist from your eyes in looking forward with cheerful hope to the future. I think they will prompt you to take your harp down from the willows and touch the strings with melodious song—

“Every fallen soul, by sinning,  
Merits everlasting pain;  
But Your love, without beginning,  
Has restored Your sons again;  
Countless millions  
Shall in life, through Jesus, reign!  
Pause, my soul! Adore and wonder!  
Ask, ‘O why such love to me?’  
Grace has put me in the number  
Of the Savior’s family—Hallelujah,  
Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee!”

**II.** To what end, or for what purpose did God call you? He called you, as we had it this morning, that you might receive Christ and walk in Him, or, as the text has it, that you might have fellowship with Christ. Now the word, “fellowship,” [*koinonia*,] is not properly to be interpreted here as a society, but as the result of society—that is to say, fellowship lies in mutual and identical interests. A man and his wife have fellowship with each other, in that which is common to both, and enjoyed in communion accordingly. All their possessions are joint possessions; they are one together in love; and if the wife has anything, it is the husband’s, and the husband, in his love, thinks all that he has to be his wife’s. Now, when we were called to Christ, we were called to have fellowship with Him of this

peculiar kind—that we became relatively and absolutely identical with Christ. We were made one with Him, so that everything Christ had became ours. This was the act of faith to let us take hold of what Christ had; and this is the result of faith, to give us Christ, and to give us to Christ, so that we are in kinship together and made one person, Christ the Head, and we, the members. Now we have a unity to Christ, a fellowship to Christ, first in His loves. What Christ loves we love. He loves the saints—so do we. He loves sinners—so do we. He loves the world, and pants to see it transformed into the garden of the Lord—so do we. Whatever Christ loves, our heart loves, for our heart and Christ’s heart are welded together—put into the same furnace and then made into one—so that what He loves we love, and what He hates and detests and abhors, we also deplore and loathe. Then we are one with Christ in His desires. Does Christ desire anything?—so do we. He desires to see multitudes saved—so do we. He desires the glory of God—we also labor for the same. He desires that the saints may be with Him where He is—we desire to be with Him there, too. He desires to drive out sin—behold we fight under His banner. He desires that His Father’s name may be loved and adored by all His creatures—we pray daily, “Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.” We are called then, to a fellowship with Christ in having the same loves and the same desires.

So too in our measure we have the same sufferings. We are not nailed to the cross, nor do we die a bloody death; yet many of our companions, who have gone before have done so, and if it ever came to that, there are still millions of us as true hearts as ever became sacrifices to God still in England. And when Christ is reproached, we are reproached, and we have learned to bear His reproach, too; and a very sweet thing it is to be blamed for Christ’s sake, to be despised for following the



Master, to have the wits of the world against us—‘tis well, ‘tis well. It was so with Him. The servant would not be above his master, or the disciple above his Lord. Some few drops of His cup we drink, and they are but few; and yet it has been given to some more than to others to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body’s sake, which is the Church.” And, beloved, we also have fellowship with Christ in His joys as well as in His trials. Is He happy; we are happy, to think Christ is happy. I do not know whether you have ever drunk that joy, believer, but I have found it a very sweet joy, to be joyful because Christ is joyful. You may have known some friend, perhaps, who had another dear friend, and he saw that friend prospering in the world; he did not get on himself as he could wish, he was sickly, he was often low in spirit; but somehow, as often as ever he saw his friend, marked his prosperity, saw his happy wife and smiling children, he said, “It always makes me happy to think how you prosper.” There was true friendship. Now between Christ and His people there is such love, that if Christ is crowned, never mind where I am, if God also has highly exalted Him, what does it matter, what does it matter, even though He crush me in the very dust? I think a man must undergo some overwhelming trouble before he can lay hold on this as a comfort; but if he can once get it, from my own experience I bear witness, there is no sweeter, more thrilling delight to be known this side of heaven than that of having Christ’s joy fulfilled in us that our joy may be full. Oh, see Him rise! See Him crowned! Hear the songs of angels! Mark the terror of devils! Know that His name is high over all in heaven and earth and sky, and you will feel, “Well, well, all these things that I have to suffer are nothing. It does not matter; it is all well, Christ is exalted and I am perfectly content.” This is to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor does the fellowship end here; nor is it possible tonight, to go through the whole of it, for our fellowship with Christ leads us to be partakers of all His riches. Whatever Christ has, belongs to us. If He has riches in pardoning, supporting, instructing, illuminating, sanctifying, preserving, or perfecting Christians, they are all ours. Is His blood precious? It is mine. Is His righteousness complete? It is mine. Are His merits sweet? They are mine. Has He power in intercession? It is mine. Has He wisdom, righteousness— has He anything? It is mine. The father has called us to have fellowship with Christ, and to be partakers in all He has. So is it with all His glory. There is not a crown He wears but we have part of it—no, there is not a gem that sparkles in a crown He wears but it sparkles for us as well as for Him! For us the golden streets; for us the chariot in which He rides along them; for us the crowding angels; for us the joyous acclamations; for us those chords of music; for us the shout of, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah! For You were slain, and have redeemed the saints unto God by Your blood.” For us the second advent with all its splendors; for us the universal reign of Christ, the gathered scepters, and the congregated crowns; for us the day of judgment with the reeling columns of the sky, and the rocks dissolved before the heat of the blast of His anger; for us the angels as they gather up the righteous, and even for us the triumph of the Lord, when with shout of archangel He shall destroy His adversaries with the breath of His nostrils forever! There is nothing to come in Scripture, or in all the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled when Christ shall come—there is nothing anywhere to be revealed concerning Christ, but what is ours, since our fellowship is with Him.

And all this, brethren, leads to practical spiritual fellowship with Christ. I hope that you, who are in Christ, will strive tonight to realize that you are in Him. Come now, I am not trying to preach, I want to talk this over with you. If you believe

you are in Christ, you are one with Him tonight; say, then, to your soul, “You are one with Christ even now. In yourself you are everything that is vile, but in Him you are nothing of the sort. My soul, tonight you are strong and rich, and blessedly perfect. In Him you are in heaven. In Him there is nothing to taunt you, nothing to accuse you, much less anything to condemn you.” Come, put on your silver sandals, daughter of Zion; wrap yourself now in your scarlet and fine linen, which your Lord has bought for you; come with Him up to the mountain and sit with Him for a while—

“Far from this world of grief and sin,”

and let Him speak to you while He tells you, “You are Mine and I am yours.” Then will you be able to say, “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

**III.** Now we conclude by noticing the third point in two or three words. All this leads us to perceive our *security*. Saints must be saved—it cannot be otherwise—for two reasons, *first*, because God has called them. Now the gifts and calling of God are, according to Scripture, “without repentance,” that is to say, if He has once called a man, He never sends him back again. What? Give me quickening grace and let me die after it? Give me to taste the joys of the Spirit and yet take them away from my lips forever? Why this were unheard of cruelty. For God to destroy the guilty in hell is just, but, I venture to say, that for God to give spiritual enjoyments, the intense, the unutterable intense delights of spiritual enjoyment, and not intend that the person should always enjoy these, to take them away forever, would be to put a sting into hell which I cannot conceive of, because He is faithful in all His ways and righteous in all His judgments. No, let the sinner bear his guilt, but do not add the unnecessary torment of letting him, first of all, know the hope

of eternal life and then find himself disappointed. Does God play fast and loose? Does He give and then take back again? Does He make us nobles and then degrade us into beggars? Does He put crowns on our heads and then slay us? Does He make us His children and then cast us out of the family? God forbid! These are unheard of things for a God to do. God is faithful who has called you. Having called you, He has justified you, having justified you He will glorify you!

Then again, there is *another reason* why you are saved. He has called you into fellowship with Christ, and that fellowship, if God is faithful, must be complete. You have shared His sufferings, you have had to bear a part of His reproach; His faithfulness secures the rest. He is “the strength,” yes, the eternity of Israel—“He is not a man that He should repent.” Pronounce His name with reverence—it has in it more virtue than 10,000 material pledges. He is *God*—therefore He will maintain the fellowship all the way through. Am I to bear the cross and not to wear the crown? Am I to come as a guilty sinner and have fellowship in His blood and yet not have fellowship in the heaven into which, by that blood, He entered as my Representative? Am I to come and trust Christ and have fellowship in the merit of that dying Savior and yet have no fellowship in His living power? Am I today by faith to be in fellowship with Him and never by sight to have the same? Oh, this were strange! Oh this were two modes of acting, sowing many seeds, this were having mixed weights in the bag! God acts on *one* principle, not on two, and where He calls us to be His children and to be partners with Christ, He will carry out the deed of partnership and we shall see His face and we shall wear His crown and we shall sit upon His throne, and all that shall come by-and-by. Therefore, courage, brethren, and let us rejoice tonight, while we come to the table that we are secure

for God has called us—we must be saved for we have fellowship with Christ.

Now I have been preaching only to the people of God, and there are a large number of my hearers that are not of this happy family. I wish I were preaching to them also; but the time has fled. Let me say this word of encouragement to them—the divine grace that called us, can call you! You cannot save yourself, but He can save you, and here is a promise which He gives you—“Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To call upon that name is to invoke it in prayer—venture upon it in fact, and trust it by faith. If you believe in Christ, you shall be saved. I know not who you may be; to every creature under heaven the same gospel is preached, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and *you*”—I know not to whom that refers just now—“You”—though you are the vilest sinner living—“*You* shall be saved.” Trust Christ now and your sins are gone; rest on Him and you are snatched from the kingdom of evil and put into the republic of life—you become members of Christ’s body—you are, by His grace, saved!—

“Oh, believe the message true,  
God to you His Son has given.”

Cast yourself upon Him! Trust His grace, and heaven is yours forever! The Lord add His blessing, now, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**617 CHRIST OUR LIFE, SOON TO APPEAR –  
COL. 3:4**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 26th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you  
also appear with Him in glory.” — Colossians 3:4**

MY DISCOURSE on Sunday mornings is very frequently the gathering up of the thoughts and experiences of the week—a handful of barley which I have gleaned among the sheaves; but I could not thrust upon you, this morning, the poverty-stricken productions of my own insufferable dullness of brain, weariness of heart, and sickness of spirit during this week, for this were a sure method of making you partakers of my misery. I have wandered through a wilderness, but I will not scatter handfuls of the hot sand among you. I have traversed the valley of the shadow of death, but I will not repeat the howling of Apollyon. This day of rest is appointed for a far better purpose.

Scarcely knowing how to fulfill the appointed service of this morning, I sit down and remember the ancient minstrel, who, when the genius of song had for a time departed from him, was nevertheless called upon to discourse sweet music. What could he do but play his fingers among the strings of his harp, and begin some old accustomed strain? His fingers and his lips moved at first mechanically; the first few stanzas

dropped from him from mere force of habit, and fell like stones without life or power, but by and by, he struck a string which woke the echoes of his soul, a note fell on his heart like a blazing torch, and the smoldering fire within his soul suddenly flamed up—the heaven-born muse was with him, and he sang as in his better times. So may it be my happy lot this morning—to place my fingers on the strings which know so well the name of Jesus, and begin to discourse upon a theme which so constantly has made these walls ring, although at first uninteresting periods may try your patient ears, yet shall they nevertheless lead to something that may kindle in you hope, and joy, and love, if not rapture and delight. O for the wings of eagles to bear our souls upward towards the throne of our God! Already my heart warms with the expectation of a blessing!

Does the earth feel the rising of the sun before the first bright beams gild the east? Are there not sharp-witted birds which know within themselves that the sunbeams are on the road, and therefore, begin right joyously to wake up their fellows to tell them that the morning comes leaping over the hills? Certain hopeful, joyful thoughts have entered within our heart, prophetic of the Comforter's divine appearing, to make glad our souls. Does not the whole earth prophecy the coming of the happy days of spring? There are certain little bulbs that swell, and flowers that peep from under the black mold, and say, "We know what others do not know, that the summer's coming, coming very soon." And surely there are rising hopes within us this morning which show their golden flowers above our heaviness, and assure us with joyful accents that Christ is coming to cheer our hearts yet again! Believer, you shall once again behold His comfortable presence; you shall no longer cry unto Him out of the depths, but your soul shall lean upon His arm, and drink deep of His love! Beloved, I proceed in the hope

that the gracious Lord will favor His most unworthy servant, and in His mercy fulfill our best expectations.

Our text is a very simple one, and bears upon its surface four thoughts; first, *that Christ is our life*; that, secondly, *Christ is hidden, and so is our life*; that, thirdly, *Christ will one day appear*; and, fourthly, that *when He appears we, also, shall appear with Him in glory*.

I. The first most precious and experiential doctrine lies in these words, **“CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE.”**

We hardly realize that we are reading in Colossians when we meet with this marvelously rich expression. It is so like John’s way of talking. See his opening words in his gospel, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Remember how he reports the words at Lazarus’ tomb, “I am the resurrection and the life.” How familiarly he speaks of the Lord Jesus under the same character in his first epistle—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” How closely John cleaves to Jesus! He does not say, as the preacher of this morning will—Christ is the food of our life, and the joy of our life, and the object of our life, and so on, no, but “Christ *is* our life.” I think that Peter or James would have said, “He is the *strength* or guide of our life,” but John must put his head right on the Savior’s bosom, he cannot talk at a distance, or whisper from a second seat, but his head must go sweetly down upon the Savior’s heaving bosom; he must feel himself in the closest, nearest possible contact with his Lord; and so he puts it, “The life was manifested,” getting to the very pith and marrow of it at once.

Paul has somewhat of the same loving spirit, and if not entitled to be called, “that disciple whom Jesus loved,” the



angel might well have addressed him as he did Daniel, “O man, greatly beloved.” Therefore, you see, he leaps at once into the depths of the truth of God, and delights to dive in it. Whereas others, like the Israelites, stand outside the bound which surrounds the mount, he, like Moses, enters into the place where God is, and beholds the excellent glory. We, I fear, must compass this holy truth round about before we can fully enter into it. Blessed is it to wait at the doors of such a truth, though far better to enter in. Let it be understood that it is not natural but *spiritual* life of which the text treats, and then we shall not mislead the ignorant.

1. *Christ is the source of our life.* “For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will.” Our Lord’s own words are—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he who hears My Word, and believes on Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they who hear shall live.” Four *verities*, as if to show the importance of the truth here taught to us. We are dead in sin. That same voice, which brought Lazarus out of the tomb, brings us out of our grave of sin. We hear the Word of God, and we live according to the promise—“Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph 5:14). Jesus is our Alpha, as well as our Omega—He is the Author of our faith, as well as its Finisher. We would have been to this day dead in trespasses and sins, if it had not been said, “And you has He quickened.” It is by *His* life that we live; He gives us the living water, which is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

2. *Christ is the Substance of our spiritual life.* What is life? The physician cannot discover it; the anatomist hunts in vain for it, through flesh, and nerves, and brain. Be quick, sir, with that

scalpel of yours! “Life’s just departed,” men say; cut quick to the heart, and see if you cannot find, at least, some lingering footprint of the departed thing called life. Subtle anatomist, what have you found? Look at that brain—what can you see there but a certain quantity of matter strangely fashioned? Can you discover what life is? It is true that somewhere in that brain and in that spinal cord it dwells, and that heart with its perpetual pumping and heaving has something or other to do with it, but where is the substance, the real substance of the thing called life? Ariel’s wings cannot pursue it—it is too subtle. Thought knows it, but cannot grasp it—knows it from its being like itself, but cannot give a picture of it, nor represent what it is. In the new nature of the Christian, there is much mystery, but there is none as to what is its life; if you could cut into the center of the renewed heart, you would find sure footprints of divine life, for you would find love to Jesus, no, you would find Christ Himself there! If you walk in search of the springs of the sea of the new nature, you will find the Lord Jesus at the fount of all. “All my springs are in You,” said David. Christ creates the life-throbs of the believer’s soul. He sends the life-floods through the man according to His own will. If you could penetrate the brain of the believer, you would find Christ to be the central thought moving every other thought, and causing every other thought to take root and grow out of itself; you would find Christ to be the true substance of the inner life of the spiritual nature of every soul quickened by the breath of heaven’s life.

3. *Christ is the sustenance of our life.* What can the Christian feed upon but Jesus’ flesh and blood? As to his natural life, he needs bread, but as to his spiritual life, of which, alone, we are now speaking, he has learned that, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” “This is the bread which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the

living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever—and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” We cannot live on the sand of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the Rock which follows us, and that Rock is Christ. O wayworn pilgrims in this wilderness of sin, you never get a morsel, much less a meal, to satisfy the craving hunger of your spirits unless you find it in Christ Jesus! When you feed on Him, your soul can sing, “He has satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” But if you have Him not, your bursting wine vat, and your well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction; rather you will lament over them in the words of wisdom—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!” O how true are Jesus’ own Words, “For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he who eats Me, even he shall live by Me.”

*Christ is the solace of our life.* Noah’s ark had but one window, and we must not expect more. Jesus is the only window which lets light into the Christian’s spirit when he is under sharp affliction. Kirke White’s picture of his midnight voyage, when one star alone of all the train could guide the mariner’s foundering boat to the port of peace, is a faint but truthful representation of the Christian’s life in its hour of peril. Paul says that during his disastrous voyage, “Neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, but then, just then, the Angel of God stood at his side.” And even so will the Lord Jesus appear to His saints in their extremities, and be

their joy and safety. And, brethren, if Christ appears, what does it matter where we are?—

“Midst darkest shades if He appears  
My dawning is begun!  
He is my soul’s bright morning star,  
And He my rising sun!”

Do not talk of poverty! Our tents are the curtains of Solomon and not the smoke-dried skins of Kedar when Christ is present! Speak not of need! There are all manner of precious fruits laid up for my Beloved when He comes into my cot. Speak not of sickness! My soul is no longer sick except it is of love, but full of holy health when once the Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing beneath His wings! Christ is the very soul of my soul’s life; His loving kindness is better than life! There is nothing in life worth living for but Christ. “Whom have I in heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!” The rest is mere skim milk and curds fit to be given to the swine, but Christ is the cream; all else is but the husk, and bran, and coarse gritty meal. The Lord Jesus is the pure flour. All that remains is the chaff; fan it and the wind shall carry it away, or the fire shall burn it, and little shall be the loss! Christ is the golden grain, the only thing worth having. Life’s true life, the true heart’s blood, the innermost fount of life is in Jesus.

To the true Christian, *Christ is the objective of his life*. As speeds the ship towards the port, so hastens the believer towards the haven of his Savior’s bosom. As the arrow flies to its goal, so the Christian flies towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain’s victory, so the believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master.

“For him to live is Christ”—at least, it is this he seeks after, and counts that all life apart from this is merely death in another form. That wicked flesh of his, that cumbrous clay, those many temptations, that Satanic trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil—all these mar his outward actions; but if he could be what he would be, he would stand like the bullock at Christ’s altar to be slaughtered, or march forward like a bullock in Christ’s furrow to plough the blood-bought field. He desires that he may not have a hair of his head unconsecrated, nor heave one breath which is not for his Savior, nor speak one word which is not for the glory of his Lord! His heart’s ambition is to live as long as he can better glorify Christ on earth than in heaven, and to be taken up when it shall be better for him and more honorable for his Master that he should be with Jesus where He is. As the river seeks the sea, so, Jesus, I seek You! O let me find You, and melt my life into Yours forever!

It follows from all this that Christ *is the Exemplar of our life*. A Christian lays the life of Christ before him as the schoolboy puts his copy at the top of the page, and he tries to draw each line, downstroke and up-stroke, according to the handwriting of Christ Jesus. He has the portrait of Christ before him, as the artist has in his studio his Greek sculptures, busts and torsos; he knows that there is all the true anatomy of virtue in Christ. If he wants to study life, he studies from Christ, or, if he would closely learn the beauties of the antique, he studies from the Savior, for Christ is ancient, and modern, antique and living, too, and therefore, God’s artists, in their life-sculpture, keep to the Savior, and count that if they imitate every vein, and fetch out every muscle of their great copy, they shall then have produced the perfection of manhood. I would give nothing for your religion if you do not seek to be like Christ; where there is the same life within, there will, there *must* be, to a great extent,

the same developments without. I have heard it said, and I think I have sometimes noticed it, that husbands and wives who are truly knit together in near and dear conjugal affection, grow somewhat like each other in expression, if not in feature. This I well know, that if the heart is truly wedded to the Lord Jesus, and lives in near fellowship with Him, it must grow like He is. Grace is the light, our loving heart is the sensitive plate, Jesus is the person who fills the lens of our soul, and soon a heavenly photograph of His character is produced. There will be a similarity of spirit, temper, motive, and action; it will not be manifest merely in great things, but in little matters, too, for even our speech will betray us.

Thus, you see I have only been wading along the banks, or at best, conducting you up to the knees in the gently flowing stream of my text. Experience must lead you further, for there is a great deep here; Paul could perceive it, for *he* does not say as I have been saying, “Jesus is the source of our life, the substance of our life, the solace of our life, the objective of our life, the exemplar of our life,” but he says, “Christ is our life,” and so He is, indeed. Just as we have a natural life, of which we know so little, so we have a spiritual life which is more mysterious by far, and of that we know beyond its effects and operations little more than this—that Christ *is* that life, that when we get Christ, we have eternal life, that if we have life, it is only because we have Christ in us, the hope of glory.

I must pause a minute here to say that, what is true concerning our spiritual life, *now, is equally true of our spiritual life in heaven*. Different as are the circumstances of the life in heaven and the life on earth, yet as to real essence, there is only one life in both places. Saints in heaven live by precisely the same life which makes them live here. Spiritual life in the kingdom of grace and in the kingdom of glory is the same—only here it is uneducated spiritual life—there it is educated and trained; here

it is undeveloped, it is the babe, the child, there it is developed, manifested, perfected; but in very deed, the life is precisely the same. Saints need not to be born-again after once being regenerate. You who have been born-again have now within you the life which will last on throughout eternity! You have the very same vital spark of heavenly flame which will burn in glory, world without end.

It will be no digression if we here remark that as we have eternal life in having Christ, *this marks our dignity*. “Christ our life!” Why, this cannot be said of princes or kings! What is their life? Talk of blue blood and pedigree, and so on—here is something more, *here is God’s own Son—our life!* You cannot say this of angels. Bright spirits, your songs are sweet, and your lives are happy, but Christ is not your life! No, this cannot be asserted of archangels. Gabriel! You may bend yourself before God’s throne, and worship Him in praises too high for me, but you cannot boast what I can surely claim—that Christ is my life! Even those mysterious presence-angels of whom we read in Ezekiel and Revelation, called the four living creatures, though they seem to bear up the moving throne of Deity, creatures who appear to be an embodiment of divine power and glory—yet even of these it is not written that Christ is their life! Herein men, redeemed, elect, favored men rise to a supernatural light, for they can say what no spirits but those redeemed by blood may venture to assert—“Christ is our life.” Does not this account for *Christian holiness*? How can a man live in sin if Christ is his life? Jesus dwells in him and he continues in sin? Impossible! Can he sin without his life? He *must* do so if he sins, because Christ cannot sin, and Christ is his life. Why, if I see the saint ever so self-denying, ever so zealous, ever so earnest, ever so like his Lord, it is no wonder now, when I understand that Christ is his life!

See *how secure* the Christian is. No dagger can reach his life, for it is hidden beyond the skies. No temptation, no hellish blast, no exhalation from the dark pits of temptation can ever, with burning fever or chill consumption, waste the life of the Christian spiritually. No, it is hid with Christ, it *is* Christ, and unless Christ dies, the Christian's life dies not. Oh how safe, how honored, how happy is the Christian!

But we may not linger longer, time warns us to proceed. There is much more than ever we shall be able to bring out. Let down your buckets, here is a deep well; I hope you have something to draw with— and you who have life within have. You who have not, may look down the well and see the darkness, or the reflection of the water—but you cannot reach the cooling flood. It is only you who can draw, who can know the excellence of this living water. I pray the Lord help you to drink to the full and draw again, for there is no fear of ever draining the inexhaustible fullness of this deep truth of God.

**II.** Now, as our Lord Jesus has not yet appeared in His glory, **OUR LIFE IS THEREFORE HIDDEN.**

“The earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God,” but as yet they are unknown and not manifested. The major part of the believer's life is not seen at all, and never can be by the unspiritual eye. Where is Christ? To the worldling, at the present moment, there is no such person as Christ; he says, “I cannot see Him, touch Him, hear Him; He is beyond all cognizance of my senses; I do not believe in Him.” Just such is spiritual life to the unbeliever. You must not expect, because you are a Christian, that unbelievers will begin to admire you, and say, “What a mystery; this man has a new life in him! What an admirable thing, what a desirable possession! We wish we partook of the same.” Nothing of the kind! They do not know that you have such a life at all; they can see your outward actions, but your inward life is quite out



of reach of their observation. Christ is in heaven today, He is full of joy; but the world does not know His joy; no worldly heart is boasting and rejoicing because Christ is glad in heaven. Christ today is pleading before the Father's throne, but the world does not see Christ's engagements; Christ's occupations are all hidden from carnal eyes. Christ at this present moment reigns, and has power in heaven, and earth, and hell—but what does the worldly man see of it? Jesus has fellowship with all His saints everywhere, but what does the ungodly discern? I might stand and preach until midnight concerning my Lord, but all that men who are unconverted would gain would be to hear what I have to say, and then to say, "Perhaps it is true," but they could not possibly discern it—the thing is beyond the cognizance of sense. So is our spiritual life.

Beloved, you may reign over sin, but the sinner does not comprehend your being a king. You may officiate as a priest before God, but the ungodly man does not perceive your priesthood and your worship. Do not expect him to do so; your labor is lost if you try by any way to introduce him to these mysteries except by the same door through which you came yourself. I never try to teach a horse astronomy; and to teach an unconverted man spiritual experience would be a folly of the same sort. The man who knows nothing of our inner life takes up *Pilgrim's Progress*, and he says, "Yes, it is a very wonderful allegory." It is, sir, but unrenewed minds know nothing about it. When we have sometimes read explanations of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, we could not but detect that the writer of the explanation had need to have had it explained to himself; he could describe the shell, but the kernel of the nut was far beyond his reach; he had not learned to crack the shell, and to feed upon the meat. Now, it must be so, it must be so, if Christ is our life; Christ has gone away and cannot be seen; it must be so that the greater proportion of the spiritual life must be

forever a secret to all but spiritual men. But there is a part which men *do* see, and that I may liken to Christ when He was on earth—Christ seen of men and angels. What did the world do with Christ as soon as they saw Him? Did they sit Him in the chair of state, and fall down, and worship His absolute perfection? No, not they—“He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Outside of the camp was His place! Cross-bearing was for Him; His occupation, not of one day, but of every day. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? Foxes, you have your holes, you birds of the air, you have your nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head. Earth could afford Him no bed, no house, no shelter; and at last, it cast Him out for death, and crucified Him, and then would have denied Him a tomb, if one of His disciples had not begged for His body! Such you must expect to be the lot of the part of your spiritual life which men can see; as soon as they see it to be spiritual life, they will treat it as they treated the Savior. They will despise it.

“Sure!” they say, “Pretty fancies, fine airs, nice ideas.” You expect them to give you comfort, do you? Worldlings to give you comfort? Do you think that Christ will have anywhere to lay His head in this world today any more than He had 1800 years ago? You go about to find what God gives the foxes and the birds—but what He never meant to give to you in this world—a place to lay your head. Your place to lay your head is up yonder on your Savior’s bosom, but not here. You dream that men will admire you that the more holy you are, and the more Christ-like you are, the more peaceable people will be towards you. My dear friends, you do not know what you are thinking! “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” I believe if we were more like Christ, we would be

much more loved by His friends, and much more hated by His enemies. I do not believe the world would be half so lenient to the Church, today, if it were not that the Church has grown complacent to the world. When any of us speak up boldly, mercenary motives are imputed to us, our language is turned upside down, and we are abhorred of men. We get smooth things, brethren, because I am afraid we are too much like the false prophets who prophesied peace, peace, where there was no peace. Let us be true to our Master, stand out and come out and be like He, and we must expect the same treatment which He had. And if we receive it, we can only say, "This is what I expected."—

"'Tis, no surprising thing  
That we should be unknown;  
The Jewish world knew not their king,  
God's everlasting Son."

**III. CHRIST WILL APPEAR.** The text speaks of it as a fact to be taken for granted. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear." It is not a matter of question in the Christian Church whether Christ will appear or not. Has not Christ appeared once? Yes, after a certain sort. I remember reading a quaint expression of some old divine that the Book of Revelation might quite as well be called a concealment, for it was rather a hiding than a revealing of things to come. So, when Jesus came, it was hardly a revealing, it was a hiding of our Lord. It is true that He was "manifest in the flesh," but it is equally true that the flesh shrouded and concealed His glory. The first manifestation was very partial; it was Christ seen through a glass; Christ in the mist of grief and the cloud of humiliation. Christ is yet to appear in the strong sense of the word "appearing." He is to come out and shine forth. He is to leave

the robes of scorn and shame behind, and to come in the glory of the Father, and all His holy angels with Him. This is the constant teaching of the Word of God, and the constant hope of the Church, that *Christ will appear*. A thousand questions at once suggest themselves—how will Christ appear? When will Christ appear? Where will Christ appear? And so on. What God answers we may inquire, but some of our questions are mere impertinence. How will Christ appear? I believe Christ will appear in person. Whenever I think of the second coming, I never can tolerate the idea of a spiritual coming. That always seems to me to be the most transparent folly that can possibly be put together, because Christ cannot come spiritually— He is always here! “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Christ’s spiritual coming can never be that which is spoken of in Scripture, as the day of our release. I sometimes say to brethren, “Do you think if Christ were to come spiritually now, we would observe the ordinances better?” “Yes, certainly.” Do you think, for instance, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper would be better attended to? “Yes, no doubt it would.” Yes, but then this proves that this is not the coming which the Bible speaks of, because it is expressly said of the Lord’s Supper that we are to do it in remembrance of Him, *till He comes*. A *spiritual* coming would make us do it more zealously; there must be another form of coming which would justify our giving up the Supper altogether, and that must be of a *personal* character— for then, and then only, might the Supper properly cease. We shall not need to have a supper to remind us of the person, when the person Himself shall be present in our midst reigning and triumphant in His Church! We believe in a personal *reign* and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But how will He come? He will doubtless come with great splendor; the angels of God shall be His attendants. We gather from Scripture that He will come to reign in the midst of His

people, that the house of Israel will acknowledge Him as King. Yes, that all nations shall bow down before Him, and kings shall pay Him homage. None shall be able to stand against Him. “Those who pierced Him shall wail because of Him.” He will come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, to separate the goats from the sheep. He will come graciously to present His people their reward according to their works. He will give to those who have been faithful over a few things to be rulers over many things; and those who have been faithful over many things shall be rulers over many cities. He will come to discern between the works of His people—such as are only wood, hay, and stubble will be consumed—such as are gold, and silver, and precious stones will stand the fire. He will come to condemn the wicked to eternal punishment, and to take His people up to their everlasting mansions in the skies. We look for such a coming, and without entering into minute details, drawing charts, and painting pictures, we are content to believe that He is coming in His glory to show Himself to be what He always was—King of kings and Lord of lords, God over all, blessed forever; to be adored and worshipped, and no more to be despised and rejected of men.

When will He come? That is a question which unbelief asks with a start. Faith replies, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons, of that day and of that hour no man knows.” Some simpleton says, “But we may know the week, month, or year.” Do not trifle with God’s Word, and make a fool of yourself because you must know that the expression means that you do not know anything about the time at all, and never will. Christ will come in a time when we look not for Him, perhaps when the world and the Church are most asleep, when the wise and the foolish virgins have, alike, fallen into a deep slumber; when the stewards shall begin to beat their fellow servants, and to drink, and to be drunk; at midnight, or perhaps not till cock-

crowding, He will come like a thief, and the house shall be suddenly broken up. But come He will, and that is enough for you and for me to know; and when He comes we shall appear, for as *He* shall appear, *we* shall also appear with Him in glory.

**IV. The fourth thought is THAT WHEN CHRIST SHALL APPEAR, WE ALSO SHALL APPEAR.**

Do you ever feel like those lions in the Zoological Gardens, restlessly walking up and down before the bars of their cage, and seeming to feel that they were never meant to be confined within those narrow limits? Sometimes they are for thrusting their heads through the bars, and then for dashing back and tearing the back of their dungeon, or for tearing up the pavement beneath them as if they yearned for liberty. Do you ever feel like that? Does your soul ever want to get free from her cage? Here is an iron bar of sin, of doubt, and there is another iron bar of mistrust and infirmity. Oh, if you could tear them away, could get rid of them all, you would do something for Christ—you would be like Christ! Oh, if you could but, by some means or other, burst the bands of this captivity! But you cannot, and therefore you feel uneasy. You may have seen an eagle with a chain upon its foot, standing on a rock—poor unhappy thing! It flaps its wings—looks up to the sun—wants to fly right straight ahead at it, and stare the sun out of countenance—looks to the blue sky, and seems as if it could sniff the blue beyond the dusky clouds and wants to be away; and so it tries its wings and dreams of mounting—but that *chain*, that *cruel chain*, remorselessly holds it down! Has not it often been so with you? You feel, “I am not meant to be what I am, I am sure I am not; I have a something in me which is adapted for something better, and higher, and I want to mount and soar—but that chain—that dragging chain of the body of sin and death keeps me down.”

Now it is to such as you that this text comes and says to you, “Yes, your present state is not your soul’s true condition, you have a hidden life in you; that life of yours pants to get out of the bonds and fetters which control it, and it shall be delivered soon, for Christ is coming, and when Christ shall appear you shall appear—the same appearance that belongs to Him belongs to you! He shall come and then your day of true happiness, and joy, and peace, and everything that you are panting for, and longing for, shall certainly come.” I wonder whether the little oak inside the acorn—for there is a whole oak there, and there are all the roots and, all the boughs, and everything inside that acorn—I wonder whether that little oak inside the acorn ever has any premonition of the summer weather that will float over it a hundred years from now, and of the mists that will hang in autumn on its withered leaves, and of the hundreds of acorns which itself will cast, every autumn, upon the earth, when it shall become in the forest a great tree? You and I are like that acorn; inside of each of us are the germs of great things. There is the tree that we are to be—I mean there is the *spiritual* thing we are to be, both in body and soul even now within us, and sometimes here below, in happy moments, we get some inklings of what we are to be; and then how we want to burst the shell, to get out of the acorn, and to be the oak! Yes, but stop. Christ has not come, Christian, and you cannot get out of that till the time shall come for Jesus to appear, and then shall you appear with Him in glory. You will very soon perceive in your rainwater, certain ugly little things which swim and twist about in it, always trying, if they can, to reach the surface and breathe through one end of their bodies. What makes these little things so lively, those innumerable little things like very small tadpoles? Why are they so lively? Possibly they have an idea of what they are going to be. The day will come when all of a sudden there will come out of the case of

the creature that you have had swimming about in your water, a long-legged thing with two bright gauze-like wings which will mount into the air, and on a summer's evening will dance in the sunlight! It is nothing more nor less than a gnat; you have swimming there a gnat in one of its earliest stages. You are just like that; you are an undeveloped being; you have not your wings yet, and yet sometimes, in your activity for Christ, when the strong desires for something better are upon you, you leap in foretaste of the bliss to come!

I do not know what I am to be, but I feel that there is a heart within me too big for these ribs to hold! I have an immortal spark which cannot have been intended to burn on this poor earth, and then to go out; it must have been meant to burn on heaven's altar. Wait a bit, and when Christ comes you will know what you are. We are in the chrysalis state now, and those who are the liveliest worms among us grow more and more uneasy in that chrysalis state. Some are so frozen up in it that they forget the hereafter, and appear content to remain a chrysalis forever. But others of us feel we would sooner not be than be what we now are forever, we feel as if we must burst our bonds, and when that time of bursting shall come, when the chrysalis shall get its painted wings and mount to the land of flowers, then shall we be satisfied. The text tells us—"When Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*"—when He comes out in all His glory—"We also shall appear with Him in glory." If you would like these gracious promises drawn out into detail with regard to the body, you may listen to just such words as these. "It is sown a soulish body, it is raised a spiritual body. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy such are they, also, who are earthy; as is the heavenly such are they, also, who are heavenly." Whatever Christ's body is in heaven, our body is to be like it; whatever its glory, and strength, and power, our vile body is to



be fashioned like unto His glorious body! As for our soul, whatever of absolute perfection—whatever of immortal joy Christ possesses, we are to possess that; and as for honor—whatever of esteem and love Christ may have from intelligent beings, we are to share in the same; and as for position before God—whatever Christ has—we are to stand where He stands. Are His enemies put to confusion? So are ours. Do all worlds discern His glory? They shall discern ours, too. Is all dishonor wiped away from Him? So shall it be from us. Do they forget forever the shame and spitting, the cross and the nails? So shall they in our case. Is it forever, “Glory! And honor! And power! And dominion! And bliss without end!”? So shall it be in our case! Let us comfort one another, therefore, with these words, and look up out of our wormwood, and our chrysalis state, to that happier and better day when we shall be like Christ, for we shall see Him as He is.

All this has nothing to do with a great many of you. You will die but you will never rise like Christ. You will die, *and you will die*—why did I say “and you will die”? Why, because you will have to feel the second death, and that second death, mark you, is as much more horrifying than the first as the trumpet of the angel is more terrible than the voice of the preacher can be this morning! Oh, I wish that Christ were your life, but you are dead, and God will say of you one of these days, as Abraham said of Sarah, “Bury the dead out of My sight,” and you must be put out of His sight as an obnoxious putrid thing! Oh that He would quicken you this day! “There is life,” says the hymn, “in a look at the crucified One.” God help you to exercise one look at that Christ of whom I spoke, and then you shall join with the rest of His people in saying, “Christ is our life.”

May God bless these feeble words of mine, and acknowledge them because of their weakness—the more to illustrate His own grace and power, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# 618 GREAT PHYSICIAN AND HIS PARENTS – MATT. 9:12

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 5th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“They who are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick.” — Matthew 9:12

THIS WAS Christ’s apology for mingling with publicans and sinners when the Pharisees murmured against Him. He triumphantly cleared Himself by showing that according to the fitness of things He was perfectly in order. He was acting according to His official character. A physician should be found where there is work for him to do, and that it is where healing is required. There was evidently none among the Pharisees—if their own opinion of themselves were to hold good—for they were perfectly whole. There was much to do, according to their own admission, among the publicans and sinners, for they were sorely sick; therefore our Lord was in His place, and fittingly executing His office when He sought out those who needed Him.

I. We shall have no time for a preface this morning, and therefore let us enter at once into the text, by observing that **MERCY GRACIOUSLY REGARDS SIN AS A DISEASE.**

Sin is more than a disease. If it were only a sickness, men were to be pitied for suffering it; but the element of the

perverse will, of voluntary rebellion, and designed offense enters into sin, otherwise it were far less truly sin; and this makes it more than a sickness, and worse than a malady. Let us not think that the picture of disease really does set forth all the heinous nature of sin—it is only a generous way in which mercy chooses to look at it, and to deal with it. As justice views it, all the plagues, venom, virus, and disease in the world, would be sweet and harmless compared with one single evil thought or imagination; but mercy leniently and graciously chooses, in order that it may have a sort of apology for its operations under the great plan of salvation, to view sin as a disease. It is justified in such a view, for almost everything that may be said of deadly maladies, may be said of sin. Let us come to particulars.

Sin is a *hereditary* disease—we are born with a tendency towards it—no, we are born in it. The taint is in our blood—the very center of our being feels the infection. Born in sin and shaped in iniquity, in sin did our mothers conceive us, and our offspring, in like measure, received from us that original sin which is part of our fallen nature. Every man born into the world bears within him, in the bias and current of his mind, the seeds of sin. Nor is this to be wondered at, for, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “How can he be clean who is born of a woman?”

Sin, like sickness, is very *disabling*. A sick man cannot carry burdens, climb mountains, run in service, walk with perseverance, or leap for joy. The occupations and the pleasures of other men are things from which he is shut out. Even so does sin, prevent our serving God. We cannot pray to Him—we cannot praise Him aright. In every duty we are weak, and for every good we are feeble; there is not a single moral power of manhood which sin has not stripped of its strength and glory. If we wished to run in the ways of God's commands, then sin has crippled us; if we would grasp God's promises, evil

has paralyzed us; if we desired to see into the mysteries of divine grace, guilt has blinded us; if we would hear the voice of God, transgression has struck us with deafness; and if our voices would swell the song of cherubim and seraphim, alas, the plague of our heart within has made us dumb! Of all of us in our measure it may be said we are, through sin, “unstable as water, and shall not excel.” Sin weakens man’s nature for all good.

Sin also, like certain diseases, is a *very loathsome* thing. Some diseases are so extremely disgusting that scarcely can their names be mentioned; but, oh, they are sweetness itself when compared with sin! The most putrid poisonous air that ever blew from a fever hospital never had such foulness in it as dwells in sin! Leper colonies are clean and safe compared with the haunts of vice. In God’s esteem and in the esteem of all holy minds, the most detestable, obnoxious, dreadful thing in the whole world is moral evil. If that could be gotten rid of, all other evil would cease to be. This is the mother and nurse of all evil, the egg of all mischief, the fountain of bitterness, the root of misery; here you have the distilled essence of hell. The, “Quintessence,” as the old divines would say, of everything that is unlovely, disreputable, dishonest, impure, and abominable—in a word—damnable!

Like some diseases, sin is *fearfully polluting*. As the leper cannot be tolerated abroad; as the plague-stricken are separated from their fellows—even so, sin separates us from communion with God and holy beings. It is not *their unwillingness* to associate with us, as much as our horrible unfitness to have fellowship with them. It is dreadful to bear about with us a cancer, which has reached the stage of sickening rotteness; and yet this is not half so terribly disgusting, as sin is to the heart of God. God is very gracious, but He cannot endure sin in His presence, and to set forth His hatred of it in type and figure, He forbade

diseased persons to enter His courts or even to mingle with the camp of His people. For the unclean there was a plain and clear separation until he had been purified. Sin necessarily shuts us out from God's presence. Into His holy fellowship we must not come—we dare not attempt to come; the fire of His anger would consume us, as it did Nadab and Abihu, if we, as sinners, should venture near Him apart from Christ Jesus. We cannot stand at the altar to officiate as priests before God, though this were the proper lot of manhood, by reason of the leprosy that is on our brow. Our praising God, simple as that might seem, cannot be acceptable in His sight, because of the defilement of our uncircumcised lips. Almighty grace must take away our uncleanness or we cannot worship. Iniquity is a polluting thing. Everything we do and everything we think of grows polluted through our corruption. The unclean person could not touch a vessel, sit on a bed, or come near a garment without defiling it; and our sin has much the same effect. Our prayers have stains in them; our faith is mixed with unbelief; our repentance is not as tender as it should be; our communion is distant and interrupted. We cannot pray without sinning, and there is filth even in our tears. Well was it for Israel that there was an Aaron to bear the sins of their holy things, and blessed is it for us that Jesus takes the sins, even of our best works, and casts them into the depths of the sea.

Sin, too, may be likened to many sicknesses from its being *contagious*. A man cannot be a sinner alone. "One sinner destroys much good." The seeds of sin are winged like thistle seeds—you may shut up the leper in a leper colony, but there is no such way of shutting up sin—it *will* get out and spread itself. A man, if he is evil, will make others evil. His children will imitate him; his dependants, feeling his influence, will walk in his footsteps; even his neighbors cannot look upon his sin without being in some measure infected by it, for, "The

thought of evil is sin.” There is a fierce contiguousness in every form of moral evil—like fire among stubble, it spreads most rapidly.

Sin moreover, like many diseases, is very *painful*; and yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on deadness, a numbness of soul-preventing pain. The most of men are unconscious of the misery of the fall. They think themselves rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing, when they are naked, and poor, and miserable. Sin causes a madness which makes sick souls dream that they are in sound health; they talk as though heaven were their heritage, when they are sitting on the brink of hell. But when sin is really discerned, then it becomes painful. I would sooner suffer—I know not what may be the pangs of some disease, but I feel sure I may say this—I would sooner suffer a complication of all the ills that flesh is heir to, than suffer the plague of a guilty, awakened, enlightened, quickened conscience; for when conscience accuses a man, there is no rest for him, either day or night; its little finger is heavier than the loins of all other grief. When sin becomes exceedingly sinful before the eyes, then there is a gloom and a heaviness of spirit which crushes the soul into despair, making life bitter, as Pharaoh did the lives of the children of Israel. Speak of Egyptian darkness; it was bright as noonday compared with the darkness of a mind, borne down with its own guilt. Oh, what wretchedness was mine before I laid hold on Christ. There are some who feel not so acutely the agony of conflict with sin, but it was my lot to feel a horror of great darkness, verging upon despair, so that had I not soon found a Savior, my soul had chosen strangling rather than life. Believe me, there is no pain as bitter as the pain of sin, and no curse, as heavy as the curse which comes from the black lips of our civil iniquities; and yet I would to God that some of you felt it now, that you might not feel it hereafter. I would that this whip

would fall upon your backs, that you might be flogged out of your self-righteousness, and made to fly to Jesus Christ and find a shelter there.

The disease of sin is *deep-seated* and has its throne in the heart. It does not lie in the hand or foot; it is not to be removed by amputation, much less by outward applications. No knife can reach it, it is impossible to cauterize it. The skill of a physician can often extract the roots of disease, but no skill can ever reach this. It has entered the marrow, the very core and center of our being and only the divine One is able to purge us from it—

“No outward forms can make me clean  
The leprosy lies deep within.”

It is in its own nature wholly *incurable*. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” If so, then can he who is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. Can a brine fountain send forth sweet waters? Shall the thorn suddenly yield olives? Can the waterfall which has been forever dashing down the cliffs, reverse its course and return towards the riverhead? Shall fire suddenly become gentle and lose its consuming power while the fuel is round about it? Shall the lion eat straw like the ox? Shall the leopard bleat like a lamb? Such changes, being changes of nature, are only to be worked by divine strength; and so it is not possible for the disease of sin ever to be cured by any human remedies. Man cannot cure himself. He may reform. He may drive the disease inward, and prevent its coming out upon the skin; he may so model, and guide, and restrain himself, that the coarser forms of sin which are condemned among men may not appear in him; but the virus, the essential poison of sin, no man can ever extract from his own heart—nor can another man do it for him. Jehovah

Rophi, the healing Lord, must manifest His omnipotent power. The utmost religionist, the most devout prayers, the greatest possible circumspection will not avail to remove the taint of sin if they spring from an unrenewed heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can it be.

And so, let us close the story of this sickness of sin, by observing that it is a *mortal* disease. It kills not just now, but it *will* kill before long. Not merely shall the body die as the result of sin, but the soul must be killed forever with eternal wrath. O sinner, you little know what your sin will bring you to; but if you will read in God's Word, you shall discover that it will bring you to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that never can be quenched. Perhaps tomorrow, you may know what a full-blown sin is. Perhaps tomorrow, I said—that word may be prophetic to some of you—but if not tomorrow, it is but a matter of time, a few months, more or less, and you will be in torment. Sin, when it is ripened, brings forth death and damnation. Oh, you do not know what those words, “to be damned,” mean! You can play with them sometimes, and lightly hurl them at your fellow creatures—but could you only once hear the shriek of a damned soul, could you only once see a spirit cast out from the presence of God into eternal misery—surely it would compel you to cry—“What must I do to be saved?”

Enough of this—it is clear that there is a very excellent parallel to be drawn between sin and disease. Humbling as it is, the fact is nevertheless most certain—we are all suffering under the disease of sin.

**II. But now, secondly, IT PLEASES DIVINE MERCY TO GIVE TO CHRIST THE CHARACTER OF A PHYSICIAN.**

Having deigned to consider sin as a disease, which is a great proof of mercy, it now graciously confers upon Christ the



character of a Physician. Be it forever understood that Jesus Christ never came into the world merely to explain what sin is. Moses had for his mission the exposition of sin—Christ has for His mission the eradication of it. We know what sin is through the law—that is as much as the law can do for us. Christ comes, not merely to tell us what it is, but to inform us how it can be removed. Jesus did not come to apologize for sin; Christ never died in order that sin might appear less sinful, that God might be less severe towards sin, or hate it less. God forbid! We never see sin to be as black as when we view its evil, as revealed in the sufferings of Jesus, nor is God's Wrath ever more intolerable than when we behold it consuming His only-begotten Son. "Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." Christ did not come to lay a flattering unction to men's souls, to prevent distress of conscience, to say to them, "Peace, Peace!" where there is no peace; no, He came to cure sin, not to film it over; not to make men forget the disease by drugging them with presumptuous draughts of consolation, but by absolutely removing that which is the cause of their dread, and of their fear to make them whole. Christ Jesus did not come in order that you might continue in sin and escape the penalty of it; He did not come to prevent the disease being mortal, but to take the disease itself away. Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do not mean *that*, but we mean a great deal more; we preach salvation *from* sin; we say that Christ is able to save a man; and we mean by that, that He is able to save him from sin, and to make him holy—to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, "I am saved," while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man who is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it!

A man who is frostbitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, Christ did not come to save you in your sins, but to save you *from* your sins; not come to make the disease so that it should not kill you, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from you, and you from it. Christ Jesus came then to heal us from the plague of sin—to touch us with His hand and say, “I will, be you clean.”

When a physician presents himself, one of the first inquiries is, “Is he a regular practitioner? Has he a right to practice? Has he a diploma?” Very properly the law requires that a man shall not be allowed to hack our bodies, and poison us with drugs at his own pleasure without having at least a show of knowing what he is doing. It has been tartly said that, “A doctor is a man who pours drugs, of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows still less.” I fear that is often the case. Still a diploma is the best safeguard mortals have devised. Christ has the best authority for practicing as a physician, He has a *divine* diploma! Would you like to see His diploma? I will read you a few words of it—it comes from the highest authority, not from the College of Physicians, but from the God of physicians. Here are the words of it in the 61st chapter of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” He has a diploma for binding up broken hearts. I would not like to trust myself to a physician who was a mere self-dubbed doctor, who could not show any authorization! I must have him know, as much as a man can know, little as I believe that will probably be. He must have a diploma; it must be signed and sealed, too, and be in a regular manner—for few sensible men will risk their lives with ignorant quacks. Now Jesus Christ has His diploma and there it is—God has sent Him to bind up the brokenhearted. The

next thing you need in a physician is *education*; you need to know that he is thoroughly qualified; he must have walked the hospitals. And certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has done so. What form of disease did He not meet with? When He was here among men, it pleased God to let the devil loose, in order that there might be more than usual venom in the veins of poor diseased manhood; and Christ met the devil at His darkest hour, and fought with the great enemy when he had full liberty to do his worst with Him. Jesus did, indeed, enter into the woes of men. He walked the hospitals! Why, the whole world was an infirmary, and Christ the one only Physician, going from couch to couch, healing the sons of men.

Something more, be it observed, may be said of Him—He is experientially, as well as by education, qualified in the healing arts. I have heard of a celebrated physician who was known to try the effect of his medicines upon himself. This has been done in our Master's case. There is not a single disease which He does not know experientially, for He Himself took our sicknesses and infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He knows His patient's case by having passed through the case Himself. There is no brokenness of heart, there is no grief of soul, which Jesus Christ has not Himself participated in; and though you may say He knows not sin in its infection, yet He knows sin in its imputation, and is, by having suffered all its penalties, perfectly well acquainted with it.

One likes a physician, too, who has a *wide practice*. One does not care for a man merely understanding his tools; we like to know whether he has used them, and whether he has been successful in his art. Blessed be the name of the beloved Physician! He has the widest imaginable practice. These 1800 years He has been healing sin-sick souls—what am I saying?—these 6000 years He has been, “Mighty to save,” for before He

bodily gave Himself to the Cross, the virtue of the medicine of His own blood had begun to operate upon the sons of men. O souls! You may see in heaven the multitudes that He has healed! There, before the eternal throne, you may view the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases, through the power and virtue of His touch. You need not fear to trust yourselves in His hands, for even the hem of His garment heals our diseases!

To sum up the virtues of this Physician in a very few words—His cures are very *speedy*—there is life in a look at Him; His cures are *radical*—He strikes at the very center of the disease, and His cures are very *sure* and certain. He never fails, and *the disease never returns*. There is no relapse where Christ heals—no fear that one of His patients should be but patched up for a season, He makes a new man of him—a new heart also does He give him, and a right spirit does He put within him! He is a Physician, one of a thousand, because He is well-skilled in *all* diseases. Physicians generally have some *specialty*. They may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, but there is usually one disease which they have studied the most carefully—one part of the human frame whose anatomy is as well-known to them as the rooms and cupboards of their own house. Jesus Christ has made the whole of human nature His *specialty*. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another sinner, and never yet did He meet with an out-of-the-way case that was out of the way for Him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but He has known exactly, in one moment, with one glance of His eyes, how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor “at home” in every case; the medicine He gives is a panacea; it heals in every instance, never failing. *His medicine is Himself!* If there is a smart caused by it, it is borne upon His own back. “By His stripes we are healed.” “His flesh is meat, indeed. His blood is

drink, indeed”—He Himself casts out the disease from poor dying men. We do but trust Him and sin dies—we love Him and divine grace lives! We wait for Him, and grace is strengthened; we see Him, as soon we shall, and grace is perfected forever! O Blessed Physician for this desperate disease!

**III.** I cannot, however, tarry longer on that point, but come to the third, which is the main one that I am driving at; namely, **THAT NEED IS THAT ALONE WHICH MOVES OUR GRACIOUS PHYSICIAN TO COME TO OUR AID.**

He says, “They who are whole need not a physician,” and you will see the natural conclusion from His line of reasoning is, “I do not go to the whole, because they do not need Me; I go to the sick because they do need Me. The reason why I go anywhere is because I am needed.” I believe, dear friends, though doubtless there are some exceptions, that if you were to take the medical profession through, you would perceive larger-heartedness, and more humanity there, than almost anywhere; and you would find that there is scarcely a physician, certainly none known to me, who would, if he had two urgent cases to consider, make any distinction between the two except that he would give his first attention to the sufferer who needed him most. Of course if the matters are both trivial, common sense allows a man to select that which will best remunerate him for his skill, but in imminently dangerous cases, necessity decides. The true physician is born with a physician’s heart, and feels for the woes of his fellow men; and, though a man has obtained a diploma, he is no physician and ought not to practice, if his soul is not in his work, and his heart full of benevolence to the afflicted.

The true physician, having sympathy and an intense desire to be of service, if there are two persons requiring him, would say, “*This* one is in the more imminent danger. I shall go to him

first.” Now, what is most certainly only fair, to acknowledge concerning human physicians, we must admit with a far greater certainty, concerning the Great Physician of souls. If there were two sinners both perishing, and Christ were not able to save at the same moment more than one, He would go to that one first which needed Him most. This is His rule. He acts according to sovereignty, but that sovereignty is under the control of His own infinite mercy, and if He hears a cry from two hearts today, if He should give any preference, the preference would be given to that which was the cry of the most lost, the most abject, the most needy sinner. Now think this over, and you will see that it is true, and most consolatory. What was it that made Christ a Physician at all? Was it not because men were sick with sin? Suppose they had been perfect—would Christ have ever been a Savior if men had not been lost? Brethren, it would have been a work of excessiveness—it would have been a folly, a monstrous folly, on His part—to undertake an office which was not required of Him! It is *sin* which makes room for His work as a Savior. I say it—you will understand me—He is only a Savior because there are sinners, and His Saviorship is based upon our sinnership! He takes that position because He is *needed*. Again, what was the main thought which was upon Him when He was compounding His great medicine? What was it that made Him shed great drops of blood? Was it human guilt? Or do you think, perhaps, human merit? Why guilt, and guilt alone! What made Him give His back to the scourgers, and His cheeks to the smiters? What made Him stretch His arms on the cross, and give His feet to the nails? What made Him bear the insufferable wrath of Almighty God? Was it man’s *goodness*? Why you cannot think of such a thing! It was human vileness, villainy, degradation, iniquity, which made such sufferings as these all necessary! As I see then Christ in His great surgery, compounding the almighty medicine which is to expel the

disease from the veins of humanity, I see Him every moment thinking of sin! Sin! SIN! Man's sin makes Him die.

And now that He is in heaven, beloved, what is it that Christ is thinking of there? "He makes intercession"—what for? For the righteous? If they were self-righteous, perfectly righteous, they would not need intercession from Him. "He makes intercession for the transgressors." He is exalted on high—what for? To reward the good? No, verily, but to give repentance and remission of sins—evidently to those who have no repentance, and whose sins have need to be forgiven. Up in heaven Christ still has His eyes upon sinners—sinners are the jewels whom He seeks! Where, again, was Jesus Christ when He was on earth? Did He not spend the most of His time among sinners? Was He not always dealing out healing to the sick, life to the dead, and so on? You might ask again, on the other hand, to whom is the gospel sent? What is it? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is the gospel—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." So those who are bid to believe are evidently those who deserve to be damned. Need, need, need alone quickens the Physician's footsteps, bringing Jesus from the throne of glory to the cross, and in His spiritual power bringing Him every day from the throne of His Father down to brokenhearted heavy-laden souls.

Now this is very plain talking, and you all receive it, but still most of the people do not understand it. A minister, when he had done preaching in a country village, said to a farm-laborer who had been listening to him, "Do you think Jesus Christ died to save *good* people, or *bad* people?" "Well, sir," said the man, "I would say He died to save good people." "But did He die to save bad people?" "No, sir; no, certainly not, sir." "Well, then, what will become of you and me?" "Well, sir, I do not know. I

dare say you are pretty good, sir; and I try to be as good as I can.” That is just the common belief; and though we think it has died out among us, that is the religion of 99 English people out of every hundred who know nothing of divine grace—we are to be as good as we can; we are to go to church or to chapel, and do all that we can, and then Jesus Christ died for us, and we shall be saved. Whereas the gospel is that He did *not* do anything at all for people who can rely on themselves—but gave Himself for lost and ruined ones. He did not come into the world to save self-righteous people; on their own testimony, they do not need to be saved. He comes because we need Him, and therefore He comes only to those who need Him; and if we do not need Him, and are such good, respectable people, we must find our own way to heaven. Need, need alone, is that which quickens the Physician’s footsteps.

**IV.** We therefore come to another point, upon which we shall not stay many minutes. It follows, therefore, and the text positively asserts it, that **THE WHOLE—THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO GREAT NEED—NO NEED, AT ALL, WILL BE UNAIDED BY CHRIST.**

Of course they ought to be left alone. No physician in his right mind thinks of sending a prescription, nor does any surgeon think of sending his bottles and his boxes of pills, to people who profess to be perfectly well. The prescription would be put into the fire, and the medicine thrown in the streets—the man himself would reckon it to be a gross insult. Christ did not come into the world merely to insult humanity. If humanity is the fine thing it thinks it is, then let it exalt itself as it may, and let it go on with the health it thinks it possesses; let it work out its own salvation if it will even say that this is required. To send a physician to those who are whole is an insult to the physician, too. He knocks at the door, “Who is ill here?” is the first question. “Nobody, we are all well, thank you,



sir. We are all well, we thank God—we are not as other men are down the street there, we have no fever, the smallpox never comes here, we never catch scarlet fever, we have nothing of the kind, sir. We are glad to see you—glad to see you—but we have nothing the matter with us.” The physician would find at once that he had been hoaxed in being asked there. And that truly is the treatment Jesus Christ gets from a great many people. You hear them say, “Lord have mercy upon us, *miserable* sinners.” They are dressed in satin, and all sorts of fine clothes, and as good a people as you would find in the entire parish; and if you come to question them, they are not, “Miserable sinners,” at all. I would like to chalk “miserable sinners” on their backs, and see whether they could bear it. It is the same with you—you come here, and if I pray about sinners, there are some of you who say, “Yes, yes, we are sinners.” But if I came round and said, “Now let us take the ten commandments—have you broken them?” I daresay there are some here who would say, “Really, I do not know that I have in particular done anything wrong; I do not feel that I have erred very remarkably.” No, the fact is, you insult Christ by sending for Him when you are not ill, and it is nothing better than impertinence, though you think it to be a compliment! The whole have no need of a physician—there is no need for a physician’s skill. “Why,” says the doctor, as he looks round upon all his store of knowledge, “what is the good of this? A fool is as good as I am to a man who is not ill; if you were sick, I would try to do my best, but as there is nothing the matter with you, there is no room for me.”

You may fetch any crossing-sweeper, and he will be of as much use to you as the best physician when you are not ill. So if you do not confess yourselves really to be sinners, Jesus will have no preciousness in your eyes; He will be but an ordinary person. If you are not sick, there is no likelihood of gratitude.

Men will not thank a physician for doing nothing. You will never be thankful to Christ for saving you, if you do not feel that you need saving. Then again, there will be no honor to Him. Suppose you went to heaven, and entered there in the same self-righteous frame of mind as you are in now—what would you say? “Well done!” There would be no honor to Christ, no glory to Jesus. A man must have a deep and conscious need of Christ or else he cannot illuminate the throne of Christ with glory by his praise when he shall enter heaven. Now I think there is some sweet music in what I have been saying to those of you who do need—though it must sound like a mockery to those of you who think you do not need it.

**V.** To conclude, it follows then, that **THOSE WHO ARE SICK SHALL BE HELPED BY JESUS**. Let the question go round these galleries, and this area this morning, “Am I sick? Am I sinful? Then I have a need of Jesus, and need is the only thing that will bring Jesus to me!” “Oh,” says one, “but I am so very sinful.” Then you have a very great need, and there is room for very great power on the Savior’s part! And that display of divine grace shall give Him very great glory! Sinner, believe on Him, that He can save you! Trust Him to save you, and let not your great sin keep you back. “Oh, but I have so many sins!” Then, again, you have the greater need! And as it is need, that brings the doctor, so your many needs will be so many knocks at His door, so many rings at His bell! He will come the faster—only plead earnestly every one of your sins, and ask Him to have pity upon you. “Yes,” you say, “but I have been so long sick.” Then your case is a very bad one, and there is the more need of His care. He healed the woman who had been disabled 36 years, and if you have been 36 years—yes, if it is 80 years—He is still able to heal all your need—let us keep to that—your need is your only plea. You have evidently a very strong plea, for you

have a very great need. “Ah,” says another, “but I have relapsed since I thought I was healed—I have backslidden.” Now there is a special promise given to that form of sickness, “I will heal their backsliding.” He does not say, “I will heal their drunkenness, and so on,” but here is a special promise for a special case! Now you need Him. This is a great sin, this backsliding. Go to Him—rather ask Him to come to you. “Yes,” says another, “but I cannot feel my sin as I should.” This only proves how much you need the Lord Jesus, since you have not even that form of fitness which lies in a deep sense of need; you cannot even feel, for you have a heart of stone. Oh, make this a plea with Him. Say, “Jesus I need You more than anybody else, for there are some who have a little health; they can feel they are diseased, but I have not even that. I need You, oh I need You more than any other!” Perhaps you will say, “But I cannot believe on Him as I should.” Then add *that*, also, to your other sins—confess your unbelief, tell Him you have great need of Him to give you faith; and go to Him and oh, may He help you to believe that He is able to forgive this sin, also.

“Well,” says one, “but I grow worse the more I think about these things.” I am glad of it, dear friend! This growing worse is a part of the cure! Suppose you should keep on growing worse—if you should get to feel yourself as black as the devil, and as damned as a lost soul—yet while you are in this world the Great Physician can heal you! And you still have this great plea—that you *need* Him—you *NEED* Him! “Oh,” says one, “I cannot see how I can plead my need as the only thing.” My dear friend, what would you plead? Suppose you were publicly begging. If I had to turn to the trade of a beggar, believe me, I would not wear this black coat, or, if I did, I would take care to have it pretty well riddled with holes, because the great thing you have to do when you plead in the street, is to convince the passers-by that you are in need. Some lean, wretched-looking

fellows have faces which are worth a fortune to them! Their cheeks white with consumption—their bodies thin and lean as with starvation—with scarcely a handful of rags on them, they squat down in some corner, and write on a paper, “I am starving,” and as you pass them, you cannot help it—your hand goes into your pocket. “Here is a case of destitution,” you say—and you give them relief. Imitate these vagabonds in all but their deception! Use their logic, the rational argument, that need is a beggar’s best plea! You *are* destitute, you are starving; spread your case before God.

The best case you can make out in order to prevail with God is a *bad* one. Let it be as bad as it can be, and I venture to say the worst is the best. Do not be apologizing, attempting to make your sins less than they are; tell Him you are a wretch undone without His sovereign grace. And there, guilty and vile, and self-aborred, fall flat before Him and say, “Lord Jesus, if You want someone to heal, I am just the man; if You want a case that can be blazoned abroad, and that will make the public ears ring, and ring again with the praise of Your all-healing medicine, I am Your man, Lord. If You want one full of sores, and wounds, and putrefying disease like Job upon a dunghill; if You want one who is very far gone—that is rotten through and through—Lord, I am Your man.”

O believe, sinner, He is *your* Savior, for while He loves to meet with such cases as yours, you should rejoice to meet with such a Savior as He is! And all you are asked to do is to believe that He can save you, and to trust Him to do it! If you knew Him, you would believe Him. He loves to save. He can save the vilest! Trust Him, then, and may the Spirit of God so lead you to understand Him, that you can rely upon Him! And, if you do, He will say, “Sinner, your sins are forgiven you, be of good cheer, go on your way rejoicing.” May God bless these words, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

## 619 THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER – JER. 33:3

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### A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 12th, 1865,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” — Jeremiah 33:3

SOME OF the most learned works in the world smell of midnight oil; but the most spiritual, and most comforting books and sayings of men, usually have a savor about them of prison dampness. I might quote many instances—John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim* may suffice instead of a hundred others; and this good text of ours, all moldy and cold with the prison in which Jeremiah lay, has nevertheless a brightness, and a beauty about it which it might never have had if it had not come as a cheering word to the prisoner of the Lord shut up in the court of the prison. God’s people have always, in their worst condition, found out the best of their God. He is good at all times; but He seems to be at His best when they are at their worst. “How could you bear your long imprisonment so well?” said one to the Landgrave of Hesse, who had been shut up for his attachment to the principles of the Reformation. He replied, “The divine consolations of martyrs were with me.” Doubtless there is a consolation more deep, more strong than any other which God keeps for those who, being His faithful witnesses, have to endure exceedingly great tribulation from the enmity of man. There is a glorious aurora for the frigid zone; and stars

glisten in northern skies with unusual splendor. Rutherford had a quaint saying that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he remembered that the great king always kept his wine there, and he began to seek at once for the wine bottles, and to drink of the “wines on the lees well refined.” They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls. You know, my companions in affliction, that it is so. You whose bones have been ready to come through the skin, through long lying upon the weary couch; you who have seen your earthly goods carried away from you, and have been reduced well-near to poverty; you who have gone to the grave these seven times, till you have feared that your last earthly friend would be borne away by un pitying death; you have all proven that He is a faithful God, and that as your tribulations abound, so your consolations also abound by Christ Jesus!

My prayer is, in taking this text this morning, that some other prisoners of the Lord may have its joyous promise spoken home to them; that you who are shut up and cannot come forth by reason of present heaviness of spirit, may hear Him say, as with a soft whisper in your ears, and in your hearts, “Call upon Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

The text naturally splits itself up into three distinct particles of the truth of God. Upon these let us speak as we are enabled by God the Holy Spirit. *First*, prayer commanded—“Call unto Me.” *Secondly*, an answer promised—“And I will answer you.” *Thirdly*, faith encouraged—“And show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

**I. The first head is PRAYER COMMANDED.**

We are not merely counseled and recommended to pray, but bid to pray. This is great condescension. A hospital is built—it is considered sufficient that free admission shall be given to the sick when they seek it; but no order in council is

made that a man must enter its gates. A soup kitchen is well provided for in the depth of winter; notice is promulgated that those who are poor may receive food on application; but no one thinks of passing an act of Parliament *compelling* the poor to come and wait at the door to take the charity. It is thought to be enough to proffer it without issuing any sort of mandate that men *shall* accept it. Yet so strange is *the infatuation of man*, on the one hand, which makes him need a command to be merciful to his own soul, and so marvelous is the condescension of our gracious God on the other—that He issues a command of love without which not a man of Adam born would partake of the gospel feast, but would rather starve than come! In the matter of prayer, it is even so. God's own people need, or else they would not receive it, a command to pray. Why is this? Because, dear friends, we are very subject to *fits of worldliness*, if indeed that is not our usual state. We do not forget to eat; we do not forget to take the shop shutters down; we do not forget to be diligent in business; we do not forget to go to our beds to rest—but we often forget to wrestle with God in prayer, and to spend, as we ought to spend, long periods in consecrated fellowship with our Father and our God. With too many professors, the ledger is so bulky that you cannot move it, and the Bible, representing their devotion, is so small that you might almost put it in your waistcoat pocket! Hours for the world! Moments for Christ! The world has our best and our prayer closet the remnants of our time. We give our strength and freshness to the ways of mammon and our fatigue to the ways of God. Therefore, it is that we need to be commanded to attend to that very act which it ought to be our greatest happiness, as it is our highest privilege to perform—to meet with our God! “Call upon Me,” He says, for He knows that we are apt to forget to call upon God. “What do you mean, oh, sleeper? Arise and call

upon your God,” is an exhortation which is needed by us as well as by Jonah in the storm.

God understands what *heavy hearts* we have, sometimes, when under a sense of sin. Satan says to us, “Why should you pray? How can you hope to prevail? You say in vain, ‘I will arise, and go to my Father,’ for you are not worthy to be one of His hired servants! How can you see the King’s face after you have played the traitor against Him? How will you dare to approach the altar when you have, yourself, defiled it, and when the sacrifice which you would bring there is a poor polluted one?” O brethren, it is well for us that we are commanded to pray, or else in times of heaviness we might give it up! If God commands me, unfit as I may be, I will creep to the footstool of divine grace; and since He says, “Pray without ceasing,” though my words fail me, and my heart itself will wander, yet I will still stammer out the wishes of my hungering soul, and say, “O God, at least teach me to pray, and help me to prevail with You.” Are we not commanded to pray also because of our *frequent unbelief*? Unbelief whispers, “What profit is there if you should seek the Lord upon such-and-such a matter? This is a case quite out of the list of those things wherein God has interposed, and, therefore, (says the devil), if you were in any other position you might rest upon the mighty arm of God; but here your prayer will not avail you. Either it is too trivial a matter, or it is too connected with temporals, or else it is a matter in which you have sinned too much, or else it is too high, too hard, too complicated a piece of business—you have no right to take that before God!” So suggests the foul fiend of hell. Therefore, there stands written as an everyday precept suitable to every case into which a Christian can be cast, “Call unto Me—call unto Me.” “Are you sick? Would you be healed? Cry unto Me, for I am the Great Physician. Does providence trouble you? Are you fearful that you shall not provide things



honest in the sight of man? Call unto Me! Do your children vex you? Do you feel that which is sharper than an adder's tooth—a thankless child? Call unto Me! Are your griefs little, yet painful, like small points and pricks of thorns? Call unto Me! Is your burden heavy as though it would make your back break beneath its load? Call unto Me!" "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never allow the righteous to be moved." In the valley—on the mountain—on the barren rock—in the briny sea, submerged beneath the billows, and lifted up by-and-by upon the crest of the waves—in the furnace when the coals are glowing—in the gates of death when the jaws of hell would shut themselves upon you—cease not, for the commandment forevermore addresses you with, "Call unto Me." Prayer is still mighty and must prevail with God to bring you your deliverance. These are some of the reasons why the privilege of supplication is also in Holy Scripture spoken of as a *duty*—there are many more, but these will suffice this morning.

We must not leave our first part till we have made another remark. We ought to be very glad that God has given us this command *in His Word* that it may be sure and abiding. You may turn to 50 passages where the same precept is uttered. I do not often read in Scripture, "You shall not kill," "You shall not covet." Twice the law is given, but I often read gospel precepts, for if the law is given twice, the *gospel* is given 70 times seven. For every precept which I cannot keep by reason of my being weak through the flesh, I find a thousand precepts which it is sweet and pleasant for me to keep, by reason of the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the children of God; and this command to pray is insisted upon again and again. It may be a seasonable exercise for some of you to find out how often in Scripture you are told to pray. You will be surprised to find how many times such words as these are given—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you." "You people, pour

out your heart before Him.” “Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near.” “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Come boldly unto the throne of grace.” “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” “Continue in prayer.” I need not multiply where I could not possibly exhaust. I pick two or three out of this great bag of pearls. Come, Christian, you ought never to question whether you have a right to pray; you should never ask, “May I be permitted to come into His presence?” When you have so many commands, (and God’s commands are all promises, and all enablings), you may come boldly unto the throne of grace by the new and living way through the rent veil.

But there are times when God not only commands His people to pray in the Bible, but He also commands them to pray directly *by the motions of His Holy Spirit*. You who know the inner life understand me at once. You feel suddenly, possibly in the midst of business, the pressing thought that you must retire to pray. It may be, you do not at first take particular notice of the inclination, but it comes again, and again, and again—“Retire and pray!” I find that in the matter of prayer, I am myself very much like a water-wheel which runs well when there is plenty of water, but which turns with very little force when the brook is growing shallow; or, like the ship which flies over the waves, putting out all her canvas when the wind is favorable, but which has to tack about most laboriously when there is but little of the favoring breeze. Now it strikes me that whenever our Lord gives you the special inclination to pray, that you should double your diligence. You ought always to pray and not to faint—yet when He gives you the special longing after prayer, and you feel a peculiar aptness and enjoyment in it, you have, over and above the command which

is constantly binding, another command which should compel you to cheerful obedience. At such times I think we may stand in the position of David to whom the Lord said, “When you hear a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.” That going in the tops of the mulberry trees may have been the footsteps of angels hastening to help David, and then David was to smite the Philistines, and when God’s mercies are coming, their footsteps are our desires to pray, and our desires to pray should be at once an indication that the set time to favor Zion is come. Sow plentifully now, for you can sow in hope; plow joyously now, for your harvest is sure; wrestle now, Jacob, for you are about to be made a prevailing prince, and your name shall be called Israel. Now is your time, spiritual merchantmen; the market is high, trade much; your profit shall be large. See to it that you use right well the golden hour, and reap your harvest while the sun shines. When we enjoy visitations from on high, we should be peculiarly constant in prayer; and if some other duty less pressing should have first place for a season, it will not be amiss and we shall be no loser—for when God bids us specially pray by the monitions of His Spirit, then should we bestir ourselves in prayer.

**II. Let us now take the second head—AN ANSWER PROMISED.**

We ought not to tolerate for a minute the ghastly and grievous thought that God will not answer prayer! *His nature*, as manifested in Christ Jesus, demands it. He has revealed Himself in the gospel as a God of love, full of grace and truth; and how can He refuse to help those of His creatures who humbly, in His own appointed way, seek His face and favor? When the Athenian senate, upon one occasion, found it most convenient to meet together in the open air, as they were sitting in their deliberations, a sparrow, pursued by a hawk, flew in the

direction of the senate. Hard pressed by the bird of prey, it sought shelter in the bosom of one of the senators. He, being a man of rough and vulgar mold, took the bird from his bosom, dashed it on the ground, and killed it. Whereupon the whole senate rose in uproar, and without one single dissenting voice, condemned him to die, as being unworthy of a seat in the senate with them, or to be called an Athenian if he did not render succor to a creature that confided in him! Can we suppose that the God of heaven, whose nature is love, could tear out of His bosom the poor fluttering dove that flies from the eagle of justice into the bosom of His mercy? Will He give the invitation to us to seek His face, and when we, as He knows, with so much trepidation of fear, yet summon courage enough to fly into His bosom—will He then be unjust and ungracious enough to forget to hear our cry and to answer us? Let us not think so harshly of the God of heaven!

Let us recollect next, *His past character* as well as His nature. I mean the character which He has won for Himself by His past deeds of grace. Consider, my brethren, that one stupendous display of bounty—if I were to mention a thousand I could not give a better illustration of the character of God than that one deed—“He who spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all”—and it is not my inference only, but the inspired conclusion of an Apostle—“How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” If the Lord did not refuse to listen to my voice when I was a guilty sinner and an enemy, how can He disregard my cry now that I am justified and saved? How is it that He heard the voice of my misery when my heart knew it not, and would not seek relief, if after all He will not hear me now that I am His child, His friend? The streaming wounds of Jesus are the sure guarantees for answered prayer. George Herbert represents in that quaint poem of his, “*The Bag*,” the Savior saying—

“If you have anything to send or write  
(I have no bag, but here is room)  
Unto My Father’s hands and sight,  
(Believe me) it shall safely come.  
That I shall mind what you impart.  
Look, you may put it very near My heart,  
Or if hereafter any of friends  
Will use Me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open; what he sends  
I will present and somewhat more  
Not to his hurt.”

Surely, George Herbert’s thought was that the atonement was in itself a guarantee that prayer must be heard, that the great gash made near the Savior’s heart, which let the light into the very depths of the heart of Deity, was proof that He who sits in heaven would hear the cry of His people. You misread Calvary if you think that prayer is useless. But, beloved, *we have the Lord’s own promise* for it, and He is a God who cannot lie—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer you.” Has He not said, “Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believe that you shall have it, and you shall have it”? We cannot pray, indeed, unless we believe this doctrine; “For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” And if we have any question at all about whether our prayer will be heard, we are comparable to him who wavers—“For he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”

Furthermore, it is not necessary, but still it may strengthen the point, if we add that *our own experience* leads us to believe that God will answer prayer. I must not speak for you, but I may

speaking for myself. If there is anything I know, anything that I am quite assured of beyond all question, it is that praying breath is never spent in vain. If no other man here can say it, I dare to say it, and I know that I can prove it. My own conversion is the result of prayer—long, affectionate, earnest, persistent. Parents prayed for me; God heard their cries, and here I am to preach the gospel. Since then, I have adventured upon some things that were far beyond my capacity, as I thought; but I have never failed, because I have cast myself upon the Lord. You know as a church that I have not scrupled to indulge large ideas of what we might do for God; and we have accomplished all that we purposed. I have sought God's aid, and assistance, and help in all my manifold undertakings, and though I cannot tell here the story of my private life in God's work, yet if it were written, it would be a standing proof that there is a God who answers prayer! He has heard *my* prayers, not now and then, nor once or twice, but so many times that it has grown into a habit with me to spread my case before God with the absolute certainty that whatever I ask of God, He will give it to me. It is not now a, "perhaps," or a possibility—I know that my Lord answers me, and I dare not doubt—it were indeed folly if I did. As I am sure that a certain amount of leverage will lift a weight, so I know that a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God. As the rain cloud brings the shower, so prayer brings the blessing. As spring scatters flowers, so supplication ensures mercies. In all labor there is profit, but most of all in the work of intercession; I am sure of this, for I have reaped it. As I put trust in the queen's money, and have never failed yet to buy what I want when I produce the cash, so I put my trust in God's promises, and mean to do so till I find that He shall tell me just once that they are base coins, and will not do to trade within heaven's market. But why should *I* speak? O brethren, you all know in your own hearts that God hears prayer! If you do not,

then where is your Christianity? Where is your religion? You will need to learn what are the first elements of the truth of God, for all saints, young or old, set it down as certain that He does hear prayer!

Still remember that prayer is always to be offered in submission to God's will; that when we say, God hears prayer, we do not intend by that, that He always gives us literally what we ask for. We do mean, however, this, that He gives us what is best for us; and that if He does not give us the mercy we ask for in silver, He bestows it upon us in gold. If He does not take away the thorn in the flesh, yet He says, "My grace is sufficient for you," and that comes to the same in the end. Lord Bolingbroke said to the Countess of Huntingdon, "I cannot understand, Your Ladyship, how you can make out earnest prayer to be consistent with submission to the divine will." "My Lord," she said, "that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king, and he gave me permission to ask any favor I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus, 'Will your Majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such-and-such a favor; but at the same time though I very much desire it, if it would in any way detract from your Majesty's honor, or if in your Majesty's judgment it should seem better that I did not have this favor, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.' So you see, I might earnestly offer a petition, and yet I might submissively leave it in the king's hands." So with God. We never offer up prayer without inserting that clause, either in spirit or in words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will; not my will, but Yours be done." We can only pray without an "if" when we are quite sure that our will must be God's will, because God's will is fully our will. A much-slandered poet has well said—

“Man, regard your prayers  
as a purpose of love to your soul,  
Esteem the providence that led to them  
as an index of God’s good will.  
So shall you pray aright,  
and your words shall meet with acceptance.  
Also, in pleading for others,  
be thankful for the fullness of your prayer;  
For if you are ready to ask,  
the Lord is more than ready to bestow.  
The salt preserves the sea,  
and the saints uphold the earth;  
Their prayers are the thousand pillars  
that prop the canopy of nature.  
Verily, an hour without prayer,  
from some terrestrial mind,  
Were a curse in the calendar of time,  
a spot of the blackness of darkness,  
Perchance the terrible day,  
when the world must rock into ruins,  
Will be one unwhitened by prayer—  
shall He find faith on the earth?  
For there is an economy of mercy,  
as of wisdom, and power, and means.  
Neither is one blessing granted,  
unbesought from the treasury of good—  
And the charitable heart of the Being,  
to depend upon whom is happiness,  
Never withholds a bounty,  
so long as His subject prays;  
Yes, ask what you will,  
to the second throne in heaven,



It is yours, for whom it was appointed;  
there is no limit unto prayer—  
But and if you cease to ask,  
tremble, you self-suspended creature,  
For your strength is cut off as was Samson's—  
and the hour of your doom is come."

**III.** I come to our third point, which I think is full of encouragement to all those who exercise the hallowed art of prayer—**ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH**, "I will show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

Let us just remark that this was originally spoken to a prophet in prison; and, therefore, it applies in the first place to *every teacher*; and, indeed, as every teacher must be a learner, it has a bearing upon *every learner* in divine truth. The best way by which a prophet and teacher and learner can know the reserved truths of God—the higher and more mysterious truths of God—is by waiting upon God in prayer. I noticed very specifically yesterday in reading the book of the prophet Daniel, how Daniel found out Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The soothsayers, the magicians, the astrologers of the Chaldeans brought out their curious books, and their strange-looking instruments, and began to mutter *their abracadabra* and all sorts of mysterious incantations, but they all failed. What did Daniel do? He set himself to prayer, and knowing that the prayer of a united body of men has more prevalence than the prayer of one, we find that Daniel called together his brethren, and bade them unite with him in earnest prayer that God would be pleased, in His infinite mercy, to open up the vision. "Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of

Babylon.” And in the case of John, who was the Daniel of the New Testament, you remember he saw a book in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne—a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open or to look upon. What did John do? The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open the book. But it is written, first, before the book was opened, “I wept much.” Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Brothers in the ministry, you who are teachers in the Sunday school, and all of you who are learners in the college of Christ Jesus, I pray you remember that prayer is your best means of study; like Daniel you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation when you have sought God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of the precious truth of God unloosed after you have wept much. “Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” Stones are not broken except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker usually goes down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knees of prayer be exercised, too, and there is not a stony doctrine in revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. “*Bene orasse est bene studuisse*” was a wise sentence of Luther, which has been so often quoted that we hardly venture but to hint at it. “To have prayed well is to have studied well.” You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayers. Thoughts and reasoning may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into the truth of God; but prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, so

that we may get at the treasure that is hidden there for those who can force their way to reach it. The kingdom of heaven still suffers violence, and the violent takes it by force. Take care that you work always with the mighty implement of prayer, and nothing can stand against you.

We must not, however, stop there. We have applied the text to only one case—it is applicable to a hundred. We single out another. *The saint may expect to discover deeper experience* and to know more of the higher spiritual life by being much in prayer. There are different translations of my text. One version renders it, “I will show you great and fortified things, which you do not know.” Another reads, “Great and reserved things, which you do not know.” Now, all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance, and faith, and joy, and hope, which are enjoyed by the entire family; but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion, and conscious union with Christ, which is far from being the common dwelling place of believers. All believers see Christ, but all believers do not put their fingers into the prints of the nails, nor thrust their hand into His side. We have not the high privilege of John to lean upon Jesus’ bosom, nor of Paul to be caught up into the third heaven. In the ark of salvation, we find a lower, second, and third story; all are in the ark, but all are not on the same story. Most Christians, as to the river of experience, are only up to their ankles; some others have waded till the stream is up to their knees; a few find it chest high; and but a few—oh, how few!—find it a river to swim in, the bottom of which they cannot touch. My brethren, there are heights in experiential knowledge of the things of God which the eagle’s eyes of sharpness and philosophical thought have never seen; and there are secret paths which the lion’s whelp of reason and judgment have not as yet learned to travel. God alone can bear us there; but the

chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing PRAYERS.

Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of mercy. “By his strength he had power with God: yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us.” Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel, and enables him to cover heaven with clouds of blessing, and earth with floods of mercy. Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah, and shows him the inheritance reserved; yes, and it elevates him to Tabor and transfigures him, till in the likeness of his Lord, as He is, so are we also in this world. If you would reach to something higher than ordinary groveling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you, and look with the eye of faith through the windows of persistent prayer. To grow in experience then, there must be much prayer.

You must have patience with me while I apply this text to two or three more cases. It is certainly true of *the sufferer under trial*—if he waits upon God in prayer, he shall receive much greater deliverances than he has ever dreamed of—“great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Here is Jeremiah’s testimony—“You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.” And David’s is the same—“I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place...I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation.” And yet again—“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation.” “My husband is dead,” said the poor woman, “and my creditor is come to take my two sons as bondsmen.” She hoped that Elijah would possibly say, “What are your debts? I will pay them.”

Instead of that, he multiplies her oil till it is written, “Go and pay your debts, and”—what was the “and”?—“live you and your children upon the rest.” So often it will happen that God will not only help His people through the miry places of the way, so that they may just stand on the other side of the slough, but He will bring them safely far on the journey. That was a remarkable miracle, when in the midst of the storm, Jesus Christ came walking upon the sea, the disciples received Him into the ship, and not only was the sea calm, but it is recorded, “Immediately the ship was at the land where they went.” That was a mercy over and above what they asked.

I sometimes hear you pray and make use of a quotation which is *not* in the Bible—“He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we *can* ask or even think.” It is not so written in the Bible. I do not know what we can ask or what we can think. But it is said, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.” Let us then, dear friends, when we are in great trial, only say, “Now I am in prison; like Jeremiah, I will pray as he did, for I have God’s command to do it; and I will look out as he did, expecting that He will show me reserved mercies which I know nothing of at present.” He will not merely bring His people through the battle, covering their heads in it, but He will bring them forth with banners waving, to divide the spoil with the mighty, and to claim their portion with the strong. Expect great things of a God who gives such great promises as these.

Again, *here is encouragement for the worker*. Most of you are doing something for Christ. I am happy to be able to say this, knowing that I do not flatter you. My dear friends, wait upon God much in prayer, and you have the promise that He will do greater things for you than you know of. We know not how much capacity for usefulness there may be in us. That ass’s jawbone lying there upon the earth—what can it do? Nobody

knows what it can do. It gets into Samson's hands—what can it *not* do? No one knows what it cannot do, now that a Samson wields it! And you, friend, have often thought yourself to be as contemptible as that bone, and you have said, "What can I do?" Yes, but when Christ, by His Spirit grips you—what can *you* not do? Truly, you may adopt Paul's language and say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." However, do not depend upon prayer without effort. In a certain school, there was one girl who knew the Lord. She was a very gracious, simple-hearted, trustful child. As usual, divine grace developed itself in the child according to the child's position. Her lessons were always best said of any in the class. Another girl said to her, "How is it that your lessons are always so well said?" "I pray God to help me," she said, "to learn my lesson." "Well," thought the other, "then I will do the same." The next morning when she stood up in the class, she knew nothing; and when she was in disgrace, she complained to the other, "I prayed God to help me learn my lesson, and I do not know anything of it. What is the use of prayer?" "But did you sit down and try to learn it?" "Oh, no," she said, "I never looked at the book." "Ah, then," said the other, "I asked God to help me to learn my lesson—but I then sat down to it studiously, and I kept at it till I knew it well, and I learned it easily, because my earnest desire, which I had expressed to God was, help me to be diligent in endeavoring to do my duty." So is it with some who come up to prayer meetings and pray, and then they fold their arms and go away hoping that God's work will go on. Like the Negro woman singing, "Fly abroad, you mighty gospel," but not putting a penny in the plate—so that her friend touched her and said, "But how can it fly if you don't give it wings to fly with?"

There are many who appear to be very mighty in prayer, wondrous in supplications; but then they require God to do

what they can do themselves, and, therefore, God does nothing at all for them. “I shall leave my camel untied,” said an Arab once to Mohammed, “and trust to providence.” “Tie it up,” said Mohammed, “and *then* trust to providence.” So you who say, “I shall pray and trust my church, or my class, or my work to God’s goodness,” may rather hear the voice of experience and wisdom which say, “Do your best; work as if all rested upon your toil; as if your own arm would bring your salvation.” “And when you have done all, cast yourself on Him, without whom it is in vain to rise up early and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness; and if He speeds you, give Him the praise.”

I shall not detain you many minutes longer, but I want you to notice that this promise ought to prove useful for the comforting of those who are intercessors for others. You who are calling upon God to save your children, to bless your neighbors, to remember your husbands or your wives in mercy, may take comfort from this, “I will show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” A celebrated minister in the last century, one Mr. Bailey, was the child of a godly mother. This mother had almost ceased to pray for her husband, who was a man of a most ungodly stamp, and a bitter persecutor. The mother prayed for her boy, and while he was yet 11 or 12 years of age, eternal mercy met with him. So sweetly instructed was the child in the things of the kingdom of God, that the mother requested him— and for some time he always did so— to conduct family prayer in the house. Morning and evening, this little one laid open the Bible; and though the father would not deign to stop for the family prayer, yet on one occasion, he was rather curious to know, “What sort of an out the boy would make of it,” so he stopped on the other side of the door, and God blessed the prayer of his own child under 13 years of age to his conversion! The mother might well have read my text

with streaming eyes, and said, “Yes, Lord, You have shown me great and mighty things, which I knew not—You have not only saved my boy, but through my boy, You have brought my husband to Your truth.”

You cannot guess how greatly God will bless you. Only go and stand at His door, you cannot tell what is in reserve for you. If you do not beg at all, you will get nothing; but if you beg He may not only give you, as it were, the bones and broken meat, but He may say to the servant at His table, “Take that dainty meat, and set that before the poor man.” Ruth went to glean—she expected to get a few good ears—but Boaz said, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and rebuke her not.” He said moreover to her, “At mealtime come here and eat of the bread, and dip your morsel in the vinegar.” She found a husband where she only expected to find a handful of barley. So in prayer for others, God may give us such mercies that we shall be astounded at them since we expected but little. Hear what is said of Job, and learn its lesson, “And the Lord said, My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job...And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Now, this word to close. Some of you are seekers for your own conversion. God has quickened you to solemn prayer about your own souls. You are not content to go to hell, you want heaven; you want washing in the precious blood—you want eternal life. Dear friends, I pray you take this text—God Himself speaks it to you—“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” At once take God at His Word. Get home, go into your chamber and shut the door, and try Him. Young man, I say, try the Lord! Young woman, prove Him—see whether He is true



or not! If God is true, you cannot seek mercy at His hands through Jesus Christ, and get a negative reply. He must—for His own promise and character bind him to open mercy's gate to you who knock with all your heart! God help you, believing in Christ Jesus, to cry aloud unto God, and His answer of peace is already on the way to meet you! You shall hear Him say, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." The Lord bless you for His love's sake. Amen.

*[NOTE—In a former sermon, while denouncing the error of the "non-confession of sin by believers," we wrongly imputed that gross heresy to the Plymouth Brethren. We have since learned that the persons to whom we alluded have been expelled from that body, and we, therefore, desire to exonerate the community from a fault of which they are not guilty. We are sorry to have made this charge, as it is far from our wish to speak evil of any, but we were not aware of the expulsion of the guilty persons.]*

## **620 A WARNING AGAINST HARDNESS OF HEART – HEB. 3:13**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 19th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest  
any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” —  
Hebrews 3:13**

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, in their coming out of Egypt, and in their 40 years’ sojourn in the wilderness, represented the visible Church of the living God; not the secret and elect body of the redeemed; but the professing company of the outward church. They were very prone to the great sin of unbelief. They believed in God after a fashion while they saw His wonders, but the moment they were brought into straits or difficulties, they at once began to doubt the power of Jehovah, and to cast off all reverence for His authority. Therefore, they fell into another sin which at last fastened on them so as to become a part of their nature—they became stiff-necked, obstinate, rebellious, perverse, and hard of heart. They would not learn, although their lesson-book had miracles for its pictures. Their hearts became so hard that albeit they saw all the great things which God did for them, they despised the pleasant land, and were ready at times for the sake of the flesh-pots of Egypt, to wear again the yoke of Pharaoh, and to die the inglorious death of slaves. Such, too, are the great sins of the Christian Church,

unbelief the root, and obstinacy the fruit. Brethren, if we know our own hearts, we must confess that unbelief is a sin which does very easily beset us, and that our obstinacy may well provoke the Lord to anger. We rejoice in God while the rocks run with rivers, and while the daily manna drops about our tents; but when the fiery serpent bites us, or the wells are bitter, or our comforts are in any way interfered with, we begin to distrust and to suspect the faithfulness of God; and as the result of this, there is an obstinacy about us which often inclines us to stand out against the plain precepts of God, because, in the judgment of our unbelief, obedience might lead us into trouble and disobedience might make our path smooth.

Oh that it were not so! It is sadly true that God's people are liable to be overtaken by the worst of sins! Egypt itself did not produce worse sins than those which provoked the Lord to anger in the camp of Israel, and to this day the Church has some in it who defile her with all the sins of the world. I do not mean to insinuate that the Church of God is not infinitely to be preferred to the world in character; God forbid that I should slander the fair bride of Christ, she is as much superior to the world as the curtains of Solomon excel the smoke-blackened tents of Kedar; but who dares deny that there are specimens to be found of the worst of sins occurring among the best of men, just as in the most carefully tended garden there will spring up here and there some of the most noxious weeds—not that the weeds are permitted to smother the whole garden and kill the flowers—but that their coming while men sleep, is an indication of what the soil is. And it is a plain manifestation that although the garden is very different from the piece of waste ground on the other side of the wall, yet it differs not in nature—but owes all its superiority to the culture of the farmer, even so, the saints owe all their excellence above the very chief

of sinners to the guardian care and omnipotent grace of the great Lover of Souls.

It seems, dear friends, that it is really necessary to warn God's people, although they have received the new nature, and are partakers of the adoption, against being hardened in heart through the deceitfulness of sin. But there is machinery provided by which the saints may be preserved from this great evil. "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

We will talk together thus this morning. First, we shall dwell for a season upon *the hardening effect of sin upon men, whether saints or sinners*; then we shall show *the peculiar power by which sin hardens, namely, through its deceitfulness*; then we will consider *the remedy which we are to use with others*—"Exhort one another daily." But what if we should be diseased ourselves with this same hardness of heart? Then it will be necessary for us to have a few words concerning *what to do for ourselves if we have to complain of a growing insensibility of spirit*, as I am afraid some of us may most justly do.

**I. First, then, dear Friends, THE HARDENING CHARACTER OF SIN.**

This is matter of experience. The first sin which came into the world hardened man's heart in a most terrific manner, so that he dared to excuse himself, and even to charge God as being indirectly the author of his sin, by giving him the woman. No sooner had Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit, than a stony hardness came upon his moral nature; the heart of sensitive flesh was suddenly petrified, and became hard, unfeeling stone; he no longer shrank from the thought of sin, but tried to hide himself from the presence of his best Friend. He felt his nakedness in some degree, but that which made him naked he did not lament or even confess before his God. He would never have been content with an apron of fig leaves, if he had known

the full measure of his degradation. His unborn children in that dread hour participated in his fall, and are now born into the world with a stone in their hearts. Man's heart, naturally, is like that of Leviathan, of which the Lord says, "It is as firm as a stone, yes, hard as a piece of the nether millstone"—the lower stone of the two in the mill was always chosen on account of its peculiar hardness. Still, hard as the heart is by nature, it may grow harder by practice and by association with sin, even as Zechariah writes of sinners in his day, "Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law" (Zech 7:12).

There is no doubt whatever that *living among sinners* has a hardening tendency upon men. You cannot walk about in this great leper colony without receiving some contagion. Though you were pure in heart, unless you had the absolute perfection and Godhead of Christ Jesus to protect you, the prince of this world would make you his prey. It was hard to dwell in so foul a world as this without contracting some impurity. Those black coals, which fill this earthly cellar, if they will not burn us, will at least blacken us. When so many fires of sin are pouring forth their smoke, the whitest of linen cannot escape the falling ash. If "the thought of foolishness is sin," and we have divine authority for so judging, then even to *think* of sin exercises a polluting influence. Can I read a description of another man's sin without getting my heart hardened? I question if reading the daily reports of crime in the police news is not a very fertile cause of sin. Great crimes usually produce their like in congenial minds, and even in the purest hearts, their recital cannot but have an injurious effect. The tree of knowledge of good and evil bears dangerous fruit; it were well if we restrained our curiosity, and left foul deeds alone, unknown, unread by us. What good can come from turning over the foul dunghill of crime? Let those traverse our sewers whose business it is to do

so; were it not better for the most of us to keep out of them? Those who are called in providence to deal daily with the coarser sins had need to set a special watch over themselves, lest they fall by little and little.

Let me here remark that *the sins of God's people are peculiarly operative in this manner*. If I see a drunk intoxicated, I am simply shocked at him, but I am not likely to imitate his example; but if I see the same vice in a man whom I respect, and whose example has up to now been to me the guide of my life, I may be greatly grieved at first, but the tendency of my mind will be to make an excuse for him; and when one has succeeded in framing a plausible excuse for the sin of another, it is very natural to use it on one's own behalf. Association with inconsistent Christians has been the downfall of many young believers. The devil delights to use God's own birds as a decoy for his nets. "I could not have thought it," says the young Christian, "that men whom I esteemed as saints would have acted so." "Well, well," is the next reflection, "if these are good men, and go to heaven, and yet act so badly, then I need not be so precise." And thus, by a course of reasoning which sin makes as easy as casting up accounts by a ready reckoner, we arrive at the conclusion, that perhaps what we avoided as a sin may have been no sin at all! And we therefore indulge in it without stint, and step by step come down to the level of this evil generation. He, who handles edged tools, is apt to cut his fingers and none the less so, because the knife is made of the best steel. Let us walk warily among men, like a man with naked feet when going over thorny ground, lest our hurt be grievous.

I am fearful that even preaching against sin may have an injurious effect upon the preacher. I frankly confess, my brethren, that there is a tendency with those of us who have to speak upon these themes, to treat them professionally, rather than to make application of them to ourselves; and thus we lose

our dread of evil in some degree, just as young doctors soon lose their tender nervousness in the operating room. We are compelled in our office to see ten thousand things which at first are heart breakers to us. In our young ministry, when we meet with hypocrisy and inconsistency, we are ready to lie down and die; but the tendency in later years is to take these terrible evils as matters of course. Worldliness, covetousness, and carnality, shock us most at the outset of our work—is not this, a sad sign that even God's ministers may feel the hardening effect of sin? I daily feel that the atmosphere of earth has as much a tendency to harden my heart as to harden plaster which is newly spread upon the wall; and unless I am baptized anew with the Spirit of God, and constantly stand at the foot of the cross, reading the curse of sin in the crimson hieroglyphics of my Savior's dying agonies, I shall become as steeled and insensible as the mass of professors already are. I cannot enter at length into the whole matter, but let me trace the gradual process of hardening of heart which may take place, in a measure, in a true Christian, but in its full extent in the mere professor, whose religion lacks the inward vital principle. You must understand that the hardening of a tender conscience is a gradual process, something like the covering of a pond with ice on a frosty night. At first you can scarcely see that freezing is going on at all. There are certain signs which a thoroughly practiced eye may be able to detect as prognostics of ice, but the most of us would see nothing. By and by, there is ice, but it would scarcely support a pin. If you should place a needle upon it ever so gently, it would fall through. In due time you perceive a thin coating which might sustain a pebble, and before long a child trips merrily over it and if old Winter holds his court long enough, it may be that a loaded wagon may be driven over the frozen lake, or a whole army may march without fear across the

stream. There may be no rapid congelation at any one moment, and yet the freezing is complete enough in the end.

Apostates and great backsliders do not reach their worst at one bound. The descent to hell is sometimes a precipice, but far oftener a smooth and gentle slope. It were hard to find out in the worst of men exactly when they were utterly given up to judicial blindness. It is often a long and laborious process by which conscience is completely seared. This dreadful work usually begins thus—*the man's first carefulness and tenderness departs*. When you were first converted, you felt afraid to put one foot down before another, for fear you should go astray. You scarcely ever ventured from your house without an anxiety to be kept by the grace of God. You used to pray in the morning with great ardor and earnestness that not a thought might be awry, not one single word amiss; and, when business was over at night, you felt uneasy lest in anything, however trivial, you might have injured your profession, and grieved the Spirit of God. Well do I recollect when I was the subject of excessive tenderness—some people called it “morbid sensibility.” How I shuddered and shivered at the very thought of sin which then appeared exceedingly sinful. I would to God I could always feel as I then did! O believer, your new-born character was then white as the lily, and the smallest grain of dust would show upon it; and your life was bright and shining, and the least speck could be discovered, and you, yourself, were like the sensitive plant—the slightest touch of sin sent a thrill of horror through every fiber of your soul. But it is not so now, at least not to the same admirable degree. It may be you can hear talk to which formerly you would have closed your ears; you can tolerate sins which once you would have shunned as though they were deadly serpents. Your walk is somewhat careless now; great sins you avoid right heedfully, but secret sin gives you little or no concern. The departure of that blessed sensibility of soul,



which marks the new birth, is one very serious mark of declension. It may not seem a great evil to have less abhorrence of evil, but this truly is the egg from which the worst mischief may come. Hear me attentively, O my brethren to whom this message is directed, as I rebuke you in the words of the Savior in the Revelation—“Nevertheless, I have something against you, because you have left your first love.”

The next distressing sign of growing hardness is, *increasing neglect or laxity of private devotion without any corresponding shock of the spiritual sensibilities on account of it*. The daily prayer will become shorter and shorter, if not irregular; occasionally the period allotted to the reading of the Word will be given to business or worldly pleasure, and perhaps frequently forgotten and neglected. It may perhaps have happened at the first, that on some occasion we could not conveniently read the Scriptures according to our desire, and our prayers were necessarily shortened, but then we sought to make up for the loss at the first opportunity, and we felt like men who, having been cut short at their meals, must eat the more freely next time. But now, I am afraid these things become common with some professors, and they scarcely care to invent an excuse for their slackness in spiritual things. O what poor pleas do some men offer for deserting their closets! How unjustly may unread Bibles accuse those pretenders to divine grace who treat them so ill! Alas, brethren, we may look each other in the face, and few of us can plead, “Guiltless.” Divine Spirit, help us to awake out of sleep, and to shake off this deadly lethargy.

Another symptom of increasing callousness of heart is, the fact that *hidings of the Savior's face do not cause that acute and poignant sorrow which they produced in former times*. Ah, my soul recollects when she walked in the full blaze of Jesus' love—when the very thought of His turning His face away seemed like the chill blast

of winter nipping the summer flowers of my soul. Then I sang—

“Your shining face can cheer  
This dungeon where I dwell.  
'Tis paradise if You are here,  
If You depart, 'tis hell.”

I have sometimes walked in darkness, and have seen no light; and I confess deep shame and profound sorrow that I have occasionally been half indifferent whether Jesus shone forth or not. The spouse who fondly loves her husband longs for his return if he is absent; a long protracted separation from her mate is a semi-death to her spirit; and so with souls who love the Savior much, they *must* see His face, they cannot bear that He should be away upon the mountains of Bethel, and no more hold communion with them. A child that is full of love to its parent cannot endure a frown. An angry pat is heavy—a stroke cuts to the very heart. A reproaching look, a glance of rebuke, an uplifted finger, will be grievous to good and loving children, who fear to offend their tender father, and are only happy in his smile. Oh, beloved, it was so once with you! A text of Scripture, a threat, a touch of the rod of affliction, and you went to your Father's feet, crying, “Show me why You contend with me.” Is it so now? Are you content to follow Jesus afar off? Are you content to be a wanderer from your Father's house? Can you contemplate suspended communion with Christ without alarm? Can you bear to have your Beloved walking contrary to you because you walk contrary to Him? Have your sins separated you and your God, and is your heart at rest? O my beloved brethren, let me affectionately, and even tearfully warn you—it is a grievous token of hardness of heart

when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Savior's face!

Still further, when the soul is hardened to this extent, it is probable that *sin will no longer cause such grief as it once did*. Brother, you remember how you humbled yourself before God with many tears, when in your former days you felt that you had made a slip in your conversation? You could not sleep that night. Even that precious promise, which you tried to lay hold of, could hardly quiet your agitated mind. You bemoaned yourself most piteously, crying out upon your bed, "I have dishonored the Lord who bought me; I have been false to my profession and my love to Jesus!" Your spirit had no rest even the next day, nor could time relieve your bitterness of grief. It was only when the Savior had, by His sweet consolations, and the application of His precious blood, effectually purged your conscience, that your soul at last had rest. My brother, it may be you have lately sinned far worse than you did then, but you do not smart half as severely. Your life is not as pure as it once was, but still, your heart is quite as peaceful, for an evil spirit whispers, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Dr. Preston tells us of a professor who on one occasion was found drunk; and when much depressed on account of his folly, the devil said to him by way of temptation, "Do it again, do it again, for," he said, "the grief you feel about it now, you will never feel any more if you commit the sin again." Dr. Preston says that the man yielded to the temptation, and from that time he never did feel the slightest regret at his drunkenness, and lived and died a confirmed drunk, though formerly he had been a very high professor. Take special heed of the second sin if you have already fallen into the first, for that second fall may most effectually prevent your repenting and returning to the right way—the habit will take you as in an iron net, and hold you fast to be dragged down with other hypocrites like you, to the

lowest depths of hell. It is a sad sign of coming declension, no, of decline already come, when we can talk of sin lightly, make excuses for it, or make jokes about it; when we can see it in others without sorrow, and in ourselves without the greatest shame.

The next stop in this ladder, down, down, down to destruction, is that *sin thus causing less grief, is indulged in more freely*. The man had *fallen* the first time—the second time he deliberately lies down. The first time he was overtaken in a fault—the second time he overtakes the fault, and runs after the sin. The first time he was a victim—the second time he is most willingly given up to it. The first time he drank the cup by mistake, or by a kind of compulsion—but the second time he comes to the feast like that of Ahasuerus, where none compel, and yet he rejoices to be a ringleader in rioting; first he sipped, but now, like the ox, he drinks by the bucketful. At first he carried only a spark in his bosom, but now he bears a whole pan of burning coals, and cries that it is sport. The man may not be ripe enough yet for outward sins under the immediate eye of the world—the probability is that he keeps his iniquities private. He eats the bread of sin in secret. He drinks, but no one calls him a drunk because it is done at home. He commits lust, but no one charges him with it because he carefully conceals his tracks, and indulges himself only when he is out of sight of his fellows. He robs in business, but no one can detect it; perhaps even the ledger does not show it—there is a particular way, of making ends meet in dishonesty, by which a tradesman may be a gross thief, and continue to be so, and yet, by putting a gloss on matters, can maintain his reputation, and be considered honest. Into such a state of heart I fear that even some of God's children may for a time be allowed to fall—but the far greater probability is that those who descend so low are *hypocrites*, and know not the grace of God in truth. I pray God

we may never prove by experience how nearly an heir of heaven may become like a child of wrath.

After this there is still a greater hardening of heart—*the man comes to dislike rebukes*. He has sinned so long, and yet he has been held in such respect in the Christian Church, that if you give half a hint about his sin, he looks at you with a sharp look as if you were insulting him. He is not to be talked to or spoken with—he has been taken for a flaming professor so many years that he is not to be suspected now. You may rebuke the sins of the congregation, and he will be gratified if you do not make too particular an application. You may declaim against his sin in public, but woe unto the friend who shall be daring enough to give a private admonition. The more a man loves his sin and needs rebuke, the more heartily will he hate the person, who, with the best of motives, lays it at his door. Mark this word—if this hardening work goes on, the day comes at last to such a man that *the Word of God loses all effect upon him*—whether he reads it or hears it, it ceases to be an accusing voice any longer; he rather finds a song of lullaby in it, and rocked in the cradle of his sin, he sleeps on to his own eternal ruin. You say, “Can a child of God come as far as this?” I believe not, my brethren, but I am speaking now of *professors at large*. These *professors* have, at last, learned to sleep over the mouth of hell and dream of heaven while damnation is denounced upon them. I fear that some here are as easy under the thunders of God’s law as the blacksmith’s dog under the sound of his master’s hammer with the sparks flying about him. Some of you have heard the gospel so long, and have made a profession of being saved so long, that being still unconverted, there is now little hope for you. The gospel has no power over you—you know it so well and love it so little. If your character could be photographed, you would not acknowledge it. If we preach against hypocrisy, hypocrites say, “Admirable! Admirable!” If we deal out threats

against secret sin, secret sinners feel a little twinge, but forget it all and say—"An excellent discourse." They have hardened their neck against God's Word, have made their brows like flints, and their hearts adamant stones, and now they might just as well stay away from the house of God as not, for there is but little hope that the word will ever be blest to them—their soul has become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And yet would I have them keep from the means of grace? No, for with God nothing is impossible! The sovereign grace of God may yet step in, and He who has power to heal may yet in the mighty majesty of His love speak to the heart of stone, and make it gush forth with rivers of repentance like the rock in the wilderness of old!

**II. We come, in the second place, to notice THE PECULIAR POWER WHICH LIES IN SIN TO HARDEN THE HEART.**

It is *the deceitfulness of sin*. The heart is deceitful and sin is deceitful; and when these two deceitful ones lay their heads together to make up a case, there is no wonder if man, like a silly dove, is taken in their net. One of the first ways in which sin deceives the professor is by saying, "You see *no hurt has come of it*." The thing is hidden—nobody has mentioned it to the church officers; it is not known among the members. In fact, nobody has heard of it—you may as well enjoy yourself as not. You are not doing any mischief—if there is anything wrong it is confined to yourself. "Really," says sin, "I cannot see that you are any the worse. You preached quite well last Sunday; you prayed quite well at the prayer meeting, and as far as the family altar is concerned, there was not much difference there; evidently sin, has not hurt you—do it again! Do it again!" You must not forget that the immediate results of sin are not always apparent in this world, and that if hardness of heart is not apparent, it is all the more real—for if a man could perceive the

hardness of his own heart, it would be pretty good evidence that it was somewhat softened. Then sin will whisper next, *"This would be sin in other people, but it is not in you.* You see you were placed in a peculiar position; there is indulgence for you which could not be accorded to other men—you are young," says sin, "nobody could accuse you if you did go a little rashly to work—if you were an older professor it would be very wrong." Then if it is an old man who is to be deceived, sin will cry, "You *must* take care of yourself; you need more indulgence than others." If a man is in private life, sin will then suggest, "It does not matter in you—it would be wrong in a deacon, or any other church officer—but nobody knows it in your case." If it is some person in high repute, then sin whispers, "Your character is so well established it will bear it."

There is a way in which you can look at things, and see them as they are not. Sin knows how to use the distorting glass so that a man will turn round on this side, and condemn his fellow for a sin, and call him some terrible name—and then he will turn to the other side, and commit the same sin himself! And, like the adulterous woman in the Proverbs, he will wipe his mouth and say, "I have done no wickedness." Sin, if it cannot deceive in this way, will beguile its victim by insinuating, "Now this is a dangerous thing for others to do, but in your case, *you have so much prudence* and have acquired so much experience, *that you can stop when you reach a certain point.* I know," says sin, "young So-and-So was ruined by frequenting such-and-such places, but you may go in and out of the same doors because you have so much discretion. It would be dangerous to expose your son to such a temptation, and of course you would not like the church to know that you go there, but really, you are a person so well established, and you know the world so thoroughly, that you may do without the slightest hurt what others may not even dream of." It is a great and grievous lie, as

we ought to know, that sin can ever be touched without injury, but yet this suffices for many—"I will go to the verge of the precipice, I will look down, I will get the delicious feeling of the sublimity of danger, and then will go back. I will mix with bad company sufficiently to know its evils. I would not go over the line for all the world—I shall be sure to stop just on this side of it."

Such boasters remind one, of that simple story of the lady who needed a coachman. When three applied, she had them in one by one. "Well," she said to the first, "how near can you drive to danger?" "Madam," said he, "I believe I could drive within a foot without fear." "You will not do for me," she said. To the second she said, "How near could you drive to danger?" "Within a hair's breadth, Madam," he said, "and yet, you would be perfectly safe." "You will not suit me," she said. The third came in and when asked the same question, "How near could you drive to danger?" He said, "Please Ma'am, I never tried. I always drive as far off as ever I can." Such should the Christian act. Some, through the deceitfulness of sin, are always testing how near they can go to the edge so as not to fall over; how near they can sail to the rock, and not dash upon it; how much sin they can indulge in, and yet remain respected church members. Shame on us, that any of us should be guilty of such tampering with that accursed thing which slew the Lord of glory!

Again, sin will sometimes have the impudence to say, "*It is very easy to repent of it. If you have once plunged into the mire, you can at any time see the evil of it, and you have only to repent and straightway there is forgiveness.*" This vile traitor is even dastardly enough to take the doctrines of grace, and turn them into a reason for sin. The old serpent hisses out, as none but the devil dares do, "God will not cast you off; He never casts away His people; He can soon visit you in mercy, and lift you up to the highest state of



spirituality; though you may have fallen into the lowest condition of degradation, you run no risks as others would, for the eternal purpose of God is engaged to keep you from final perdition, and therefore you may drink the deadly thing, and it shall not hurt you; and tread upon serpents, and they shall not bite you.” “Their damnation is just,” says the Apostle, of those who use the doctrines of grace as an argument for licentiousness. The child of God scorns the thought of making the love of God a reason for sin. When a little boy was tempted to steal from an orchard, the others said to him, “You may safely do it; your father is so fond of you, that he will not beat you.” “No, no,” said the little fellow, “that is the very reason why I would not go a thieving, for I should grieve my father who is so kind and so good to me.” Yet the deceitfulness of sin is such that it will turn the strongest motive for holiness into an argument for rebellion against God! My dear friends, I feel the weight of this subject pressing down on my own heart; and for that very reason I cannot bring out these truths of God as I would desire, so as to make them flash into your faces; but I do feel that it must be true of some of you who make a profession of religion, that sin, through its deceitfulness, is tampering with your spirits, trying to make you traitors to God—seeking, if it possibly can—to pervert your mind from hatred of sin, and from true love to Jesus Christ.

**III. I pass on, however, to hint at THE REMEDY WHICH IS PROVIDED IN THE TEXT FOR US TO USE WITH OTHERS.**

“Exhort one another,” and we are told when to do it—“daily,” and when to begin to do it—“while it is called today.” Doubtless many professors would be saved from gross sins if mutual exhortation were more commonly practiced in the Churches of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. This duty belongs primarily to the *pastor* and to *church officers*. We are set in the church to see after the good of the people, and it is our

business both in public and in private, as far as we have opportunity, to exhort daily; and especially where we see any coldness creeping over men, where there begins to be a decline in the ways of God, it is our duty to be most earnest in exhortation. The duty belongs to you all, too, “Exhort one another daily.” *Parents* should be careful concerning their children in this matter. You act not the part of a true father, unless you see to it your son is in church membership or not, that upon the slightest inconsistency your children should receive a gentle word of rebuke from you. You *matrons* in Israel—you are not true mothers of the church, unless you look after the young sisters to keep them out of sin. *Sunday school teachers*, this is peculiarly your work with regard to your own classes. In this Church, so many have been brought out of the school, into the church, that I may insist the more earnestly upon this duty. Watch over your children, not only that they may be converted, but that after being converted they may be as watered gardens—no plants withering—but all the graces of the Spirit coming to perfection through your care. Here is work for the *elders* among us. You whose gray heads betoken years of experience, and whose years of experience ought to have given you wisdom and knowledge, you may use the superiority which age affords you to offer a word of exhortation, lovingly and tenderly, to the young. You can speak as those of us who are younger cannot speak—for you can tell what you have tasted and have handled; perhaps you can even tell where you have smarted by reason of your own faults and follies. *All of you, without exception*, whether you are rich or poor, see to each others’ souls! Say not, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” but seek your brother’s good for edification.

I do hope there will be a larger degree of sociality among the members of this church than ever, although up to now I have had no cause of complaint. Some churches never can

practice mutual exhortation because the members do not know each other; the members are lumps of ice floating about—huge blocks of ice without connection with one another. It ought not to be so—the very fact of church membership, drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, it seems to me, entitles every man to admonish, and to be admonished. No, it makes it the imperative duty of every such person to see that he cares for the soul of his fellow. I would not abolish social distinctions, God forbid! They must always exist, I believe, at least till the Lord comes; but in the Church of God, membership and brotherhood should, at least when you come together here, override all social distinctions; and as in Cromwell's army, the private might often be heard around the campfire talking to the major, and the captain taking it upon himself to rebuke the colonel, so should it be among us. We should feel that we are one in Christ Jesus—that while we regard distinctions among men in civil life, yet in spiritual things we so care for each other's good, and so desire the edification of the entire body of Christ, that we watch over one another carefully and prayerfully—and exhort one another daily. In such a church as this there is peculiar need of it. What can we, a handful of church officers, do among 3,000 of you? If you do not exercise oversight over one another, what can be done? I thank God the duty is not altogether neglected, but I would stimulate you to a greater diligence in the exercise of it. You know of someone, perhaps, who is backsliding—do not tell anybody else—go privately to him. You know of a sister whose spiritual life is in a decline. Do not talk to your neighbors, or even, at first, communicate with us about it—labor to get your own heart right, and then seek to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourself lest you also be tempted. If we do not do this, we shall as a church suffer great dishonor. It is unavoidable in so many but that we should be troubled with

some hypocrites. How can our church be kept right, instrumentally, except by much watchfulness? We do not wish to be dishonored, we do not desire by great falls to grieve the name of Christ; then let us watch over one another. It is so pleasant and so blessed to restore a brother from the error of his ways, that I can offer you no greater reward than these two—to screen the name of Christ from shame, and to have the pleasure of saving a soul from death, and covering a multitude of sins.

**IV. Lastly, SUPPOSE THIS TO BE THE CASE WITH ANY ONE OF US, WHAT THEN?**

We cannot very well, as a rule, ask a brother to exhort us when we feel conscious of insensibility, although it were well if some dear friend could be trusted to give us, every now and then, a solemn admonition. Some of us are in such a position that we are not very likely to be exhorted—we are keepers of the vineyard, and have none who would take upon themselves to admonish us. Our enemies, however, very ably supply the lack—for they often tell us very profitable, but very unpleasant truths which do us a deal of good, and they are never restrained by any fear of hurting our feelings. We have great reason to thank God for some men's enmity—it is the only way in which they could serve us. Failing this—and private Christians miss this bitter medicine—what is to be done? Suppose we have begun to falter? What is to be done? Shall I say, "Suppose?" Come pass the question round, dear friends. Is it not true with too many of us, that we are growing careless and insensible? Do I not hear some honest hearts cry, "There is no supposition in the case, we have already gone back"? Public services to some of you have grown dull compared with what they used to be, and yet the preacher is the same! Prayer meetings you scarcely attend, or if you are there, your hearts are not on fire with vehement longings after your God; private prayer drags

heavily; Bible reading is almost given up; communion with Christ is becoming a thing of the past; holy joys and spiritual ecstasies, things which you have read of and heard about, but do not enjoy yourselves! May it not be so with you!

I feel sometimes as if were I cut in my heart with a sword, I would bless the sword, so long as I could but smart and bleed under it. Oh it is a horrible thing, an accursed thing, to abide in a state of insensibility! Oh, for heartbreaks! To have a heart broken thoroughly would be a blessing! Yes, to be driven to despair might be an enviable thing rather than not to feel at all! I will not, therefore, say, “Suppose,” but I will say it is so with a great many! Then what had we better do? My brethren, *let us labor to feel what an evil thing this is*—little love to our own dying Savior, little joy in our precious Jesus, little fellowship with our spiritual and well-beloved Husband, our Lord, our covenant head. Be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Cover your faces, brethren, and let boasting be put away. Put on sackcloth! Heap ashes on your heads! Hold a true lent in your souls, while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Do not stop at sorrow! Remember where you first received salvation. *Go at once to the cross.* There, and there only, can you get your spirit quickened. There hangs the Savior! There *was* life in Him 10 or 20 years ago, when you first looked; there is life in Him still! If your experience should seem to you to have been a delusion, and your faith to have been presumption, Christ is a Savior still. He came into the world to save sinners—and if you are not a saint—you are a sinner; go to Him as such. Let us, my brethren, begin again. Let us go to the starting point. Let us lay again the fundamentals. Let us sing—

“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,

And that You bid me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come!”

No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead we may have become—let us go again in all the rags, and poverty, and defilement of our natural condition, and throw ourselves flat on our faces before His mighty cross! “With all my sin, and all my hardness of heart,” let the believer say, “I do believe that Jesus died for me.” Let him clasp that cross! Let him look into those listless eyes! Let him bathe in that fountain filled with blood—this will bring back to him his first love! This will restore the ancient holiness of his faith, and the former tenderness of his soul!

To you who think that you never were converted, and probably never were—who have grown very hard, and fear you never could by any possibility melt in repentance—I give this exhortation, and O, may the Holy Spirit enable you to obey it. Come to Jesus you vilest of men! Laboring ones, heavy laden ones, come to Jesus! Black, foul, filthy, hard-hearted ones, come, to Jesus! He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him. We are not in hell yet, the iron door has not grated on its hinges, and the dread bolt has not yet slid into its socket! There is hope, for there is life. There is hope for there is a promise; there is hope for there hangs the Savior—there is hope for me, for you, for both of us—if we go humbly to the mercy seat, and take Christ to be our all-in-all! God help us to do it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**621 “THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST” –  
I PET. 1:19**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 26th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“The precious blood of Christ.” — I Peter 1:19**

IT IS FREQUENTLY my fear I should fall into the habit of *preaching about the gospel rather than directly preaching the gospel*. And then, I labor to return to the first principle of our faith, and often take a text upon which it would not be possible to say anything new, but which will compel me to recapitulate in your hearing those things which are vital, essential, and fundamental to the life of our souls. With such a text as this before me, if I do not preach the gospel, I shall do violence both to the sacred Word, and to my own conscience. Surely I may hope that while endeavoring to unfold my text, and to proclaim the saving Word, the Holy Spirit will be present to take of the things of Christ, and to show them unto us and make them saving to our souls.

Blood has from the beginning been regarded by God as a most precious thing. He has hedged about this fountain of vitality with the most solemn sanctions. The Lord thus commanded Noah and his descendants, “Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.” Man had every moving thing that lives given him for meat, but they were

by no means to eat the blood with the flesh. Things strangled were to be considered unfit for food, since God would not have man become too familiar with blood by eating or drinking it in any shape or form. Even the blood of bulls and goats, thus, had a sacredness put upon it by God's decrees. As for the blood of man, you remember how God's threats ran, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." It is true that the first murderer had not his blood shed by man, but then the crime was new, and the penalty had not then been settled and proclaimed; and therefore, the case was clearly exceptional and one by itself. And, moreover, Cain's doom was probably far more terrible than if he had been slain upon the spot; he was permitted to fill up his measure of wickedness, to be a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth; and then, to enter into the dreadful heritage of wrath, which his life of sin had doubtless greatly increased.

Under the theocratic dispensation, in which God was the King and governed Israel, murder was always punished in the most exemplary manner, and there was never any toleration or excuse for it. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life was the stern inexorable law. It is expressly written, "You shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death." Even in cases where life was taken in chance medley or misadventure, the matter was not overlooked; the slayer fled at once to a city of refuge where, after having his case properly tried, he was allowed to reside; but there was no safety for him elsewhere until the death of the high priest. The general law in all cases was, "So you shall not pollute the land wherein you are: for blood defiles the land: and



the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed there, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not, therefore, the land which you shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I, the Lord, dwell among the children of Israel.” Strange is it that that very thing which defiles should turn out to be that which alone can cleanse! It is clear, then, that blood was always precious in God’s sight, and He would have it so in ours. He first forbids the blood of beasts as food of man, then avenges the blood of man shed in anger; and, furthermore, takes care that even accidents shall not pour it out unheeded. Nor is this all, for we hear *within* us the echo of that law. We feel that God has truly made blood a sacred thing, for though some can, through use and habit, read the story of war with patience, if not with pleasure; though the sound of the trumpet and the drum and the tramp of soldiery will stir our heart and make us, for the moment, sympathize with the martial spirit; yet, if we could see war as it really is, if we could only walk but halfway across a battlefield, or see but one wounded man, a cold shiver would shoot through the very marrow of our bones, and we would have experiential proof that blood is, indeed, a sacred thing.

The other night, when I listened to one who professed to have come from battlefields of the American war, I felt a faintness and clammy sweat steal over me, as he shocked and horrified us with the details of mutilated bodies, and spoke of standing up to the tops of his boots in pools of human gore. The shudder which ran through us all was a sure confirmation of the sanctity with which God has forever guarded the symbol and nutriment of life. We cannot even contemplate the probability of the shedding of blood without fear and trembling; and comforts which entail high risks in their production or procuring will lose all sweetness to men of humane dispositions. Who does not sympathize with David in his action with regard to the water procured by his three mighties! The three heroes

broke through the hosts of the Philistines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem, and as soon as he received that water, though very thirsty and much longing for it, yet he felt he could not touch it because these men had run such dreadful risks in breaking thrice through the Philistine hosts to bring it to him! He, therefore, took the water and poured it out before the Lord, as if it was not meet that men should run risk of life for any but God who gave life. His words were very touching, "My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing; shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy? For with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it." I wonder at the cruelty of the great crowds who delight to see men and women running such fearful risks of life in rope-dancing. How is it that they can feed their morbid curiosity on such dreadful food, and greet the man who is foolish enough to run such hazards with acclamations because of his foolhardiness? How much more Christ-like the regret of David that he should have led any man to risk his life for his comfort! How much more laudable was his belief that nothing short of the highest benevolence to man, or the highest devotion to God, can justify such jeopardy of life!

Further permit me to observe that the seal of the sanctity of blood is usually set upon the conscience even of the most depraved of men, not merely upon gentle souls and sanctified spirits, but even upon the most hardened. You will notice that men, bad as they are, shrink from the disgrace of taking blood money. Even those high priests who could sit down and gloat their eyes with the sufferings of the Savior would not receive the price of blood into the treasury; and even Judas, that son of perdition, who could contemplate without horror the treachery by which he betrayed his Master—yet when he had the 30 pieces of silver in his palm, found the money too hot to hold; he threw it down in the Temple, for he could not bear or abide

the sight of “the price of blood.” This is another proof that even when virtue has become extinct, and vice reigns, yet God has put the broad arrow of His own sovereignty so manifestly upon the very thought of blood, that even these worst of spirits are compelled to shrink from tampering with it.

Now, if in ordinary cases the shedding of life is thus precious, can you guess how fully God utters His heart's meaning when He says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death *of His saints*”? If the death of a rebel is precious, what must be the death of a child? If He will not contemplate the shedding of the blood of His own enemies, and of them who curse Him without proclaiming vengeance, what do you think He feels concerning His own elect, of whom He says, “Precious shall their blood be in His sight”? Will He not avenge them, though He bears long with them? Shall the cup which the harlot of Rome filled with the blood of the saints long remain unavenged? Shall not the martyrs from Piedmont, and the Alps, and from our Smithfield, and from the hills of covenanting Scotland, yet obtain from God the vengeance due for all that they suffered, and all the blood which they poured forth in the defense of His cause?

I have taken you up, you see, from the *beast to man*, from man to *God's chosen* men, the martyrs. I have another step to indicate to you, it is a far larger one—it is to the blood OF JESUS CHRIST. Here powers of speech would fail to convey to you an idea of the preciousness! Behold here, a Person innocent, without taint within, or flaw without; a Person meritorious who magnified the law and made it honorable; a Person who served both God and man even unto death. No, here you have a divine Person— so divine, that in the acts of the Apostles Paul calls His blood the “blood of God.” Place innocence, and merit, and dignity, and position, and Godhead itself in the scale, and then conceive what must be the

inestimable value of the blood which Jesus Christ poured forth. Angels must have seen that matchless blood-shedding with wonder and amazement, and even God Himself saw what never before was seen in creation or in providence; He saw Himself more gloriously displayed than the whole universe beside.

Let us come nearer to the text and try to show forth the preciousness of the blood of Christ. We shall confine ourselves to an enumeration of some of the many properties possessed by this precious blood. I felt, as I was studying, that I should have so many divisions this morning, that some of you would compare my sermon to the bones in Ezekiel's vision—they were very many, and they were very dry; but I am in hopes that God's Holy Spirit may so descend upon the bones in my sermon—which would be but dry of themselves—that they being quickened, and full of life, you may admire the exceeding great army of God's thoughts of loving-kindness towards His people in the sacrifice of His own dear Son.

The precious blood of Christ is useful to God's people in a thousand ways—we intend to speak of 12 of them. After all, the real preciousness of a thing in the time of pinch and trial must depend upon its usefulness. A bag of pearls would be to us, this morning, far more precious than a bag of bread; but you have all heard the story of the man in the desert who stumbled, when near to death, upon a bag, and opened it, hoping that it might be the wallet of some passer-by, and he found in it *nothing but pearls!* If they had been crusts of bread, how much more precious would they have been! I say, in the hour of necessity and peril, the *use* of a thing really constitutes the preciousness of it. This may not be according to political economy, but it is according to common sense.

1. The precious blood of Christ has a **REDEEMING POWER**. It redeems from the law. We were all under the law

which says, “Do this and live.” We were slaves to it—Christ has paid the ransom price, and the law is no longer our tyrant master. We are entirely free from it. The law had a dreadful curse; it threatened that whoever should violate one of its precepts should die—“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” By the fear of this curse, the law inflicted a continual dread on those who were under it; they knew they had disobeyed it, and they were all their lifetime subject to bondage, fearful lest death and destruction should come upon them at any moment; but we are not under the law, but under grace, and consequently, “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” We are not afraid of the law now—its worst thunders cannot affect us, for they are not hurled at us! Its most tremendous lightning cannot touch us, for we are sheltered beneath the cross of Christ, where the thunder loses its terror, and the lightning its fury. We read the law of God with pleasure now; we look upon it as in the ark covered with the mercy seat, and not thundering in tempests from Sinai’s fiery brow.

Happy is that man who knows his full redemption from the law, its curse, its penalty, its present dread. My brethren, the life of a Jew, happy as it was compared with that of a heathen, was perfect drudgery compared to yours and mine. He was hedged in with a thousand commands and prohibitions; his forms and ceremonies were abundant, and their details minutely arranged; he was always in danger of making himself unclean. If he sat upon a bed or upon a stool he might be defiled; if he drank out of an earthen pitcher, or even touched the wall of a house, a leprous man might have put his hand there before him, and he would thus become defiled. A thousand sins of ignorance were like so many hidden pits in his way; he must be perpetually in fear lest he should be cut off

from the people of God. When he had done his best any one day, he knew he had not finished—no Jew could ever talk of a finished work. The bullock was offered, but he must bring another; the lamb was offered this morning, but another must be offered this evening, another tomorrow, and another the next day. The Passover is celebrated with holy rites; it must be kept in the same manner next year. The High Priest has gone within the veil once, but he must go there again; the thing is never finished. It is always beginning. He never comes any nearer to the end. "The law could not make the comer thereunto perfect." But see *our* position—we are redeemed from this. Our law is fulfilled, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; our Passover is slain, for Jesus died; our righteousness is finished, for we are complete in Him; our victim is slain, our Priest has gone within the veil, the blood is sprinkled; we are clean, and clean beyond any fear of defilement, "For He has perfected forever those who were set apart." Value this precious blood, my beloved, because thus it has redeemed you from the slavery and bondage which the law imposed upon its followers.

2. The value of the blood lies much in its **ATONING EFFICACY**. We are told in Leviticus, that "It is the blood which makes atonement for the soul." God never forgave sin apart from blood under the law. This stood as a constant text—"Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Meal and honey, sweet spices and incense, would not avail without shedding of blood. There was no remission promised to future diligence or deep repentance—without shedding of blood, pardon never came. The blood, and the blood alone, put away sin, and permitted a man to come to God's courts to worship—because it made him one with God. The blood is the great at-one-ment. There is no hope of pardon for the sin of any man except through its punishment being fully endured. God must

punish sin. It is not an arbitrary arrangement that sin shall be punished, but it is a part of the very constitution of moral government that sin must be punished. Never did God swerve from that, and never will He. “He will by no means clear the guilty.” Christ, therefore, came and was punished in the place of all His people. Ten thousands times ten thousands are the souls for whom Jesus shed His blood. He, for the sins of all the elect, has made a complete atonement, for every man born of Adam who has believed or shall believe on Him, or who is taken to glory before being capable of believing, Christ has made a complete atonement; and there is no other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus’ precious blood. I may make sacrifices; I may mortify my body; I may be baptized; I may receive sacraments; I may pray until my knees grow calloused with kneeling; I may read devout words until I know them by heart; I may celebrate masses; I may worship in one language, or in 50 languages—but I can never be at one with God except by blood—and that blood, “The precious blood of Christ.”

My dear friends, many of you have felt the power of Christ’s redeeming blood; you are not under the law now, but under grace; you have also felt the power of the atoning blood; you know that you are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son; you feel that He is no angry God to you, that He loves you with a love unchangeable. But this is not the case with you all. O that it were! I do pray that you may know, this very day, the atoning power of the blood of Jesus! Creature, would you not be at one with your Creator? Puny man, would you not have Almighty God to be your Friend? You can not be at one with God except through the at-one-ment! God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins. Oh, take the propitiation through faith in His blood, and be at one with God!

3. Thirdly, the precious blood of Jesus Christ has A **CLEANSING POWER**. John tells us in his first epistle, first chapter, 7th verse, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Sin has a directly defiling effect upon the sinner, from which comes the need of cleansing. Suppose that God, the Holy One, were perfectly willing to be at one with an unholy sinner, which is supposing a case that cannot be, yet even should the pure eyes of the Most High wink at sin, still, as long as we are unclean, we never could feel in our own hearts anything like joy, and rest, and peace. Sin is a plague to the man who has it, as well as a hateful thing to the God who abhors it. I must be made clean. I must have my iniquities washed away, or I can never be happy. The first mercy that is sung of in the 103rd Psalm is, "Who forgives all your iniquities." Now, we know it is by the precious blood that sin is cleansed. Murder, adultery, theft—whatever the sin may be—there is power in the veins of Christ to take it away at once and forever! No matter how many, nor how deeply-seated our offenses may be, the blood cries, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is the song of heaven—"We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This is the experience of earth, for none was ever cleansed except in this fountain opened for the house of David for sin and for uncleanness.

You have heard this so often that perhaps if an angel told it to you, you would not take much interest in it—unless you have known *experientially* the horror of uncleanness and the blessedness of being made clean. Beloved, it is a thought which ought to make our hearts leap within us, that through Jesus' blood there is not a spot left upon any believer, not a wrinkle nor any such thing—



“Though in myself defiled I am,  
And black as Kedar’s tent, appear,  
Yet when I put Your garment on,  
Fair as the courts of Solomon.”

You have no spiritual beauty, beloved, apart from Christ; but, having Christ, He Himself says, “You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.” Oh, precious blood which makes the sinner white as snow, and takes out the leopard’s spots! Oh, precious blood removing the hell-stains of abundant iniquity, and permitting me to stand accepted in the Beloved, notwithstanding all the many ways in which I have rebelled against my God!

4. A fourth property of the blood of Christ is **ITS PRESERVING POWER**. You will rightly comprehend this when you remember that dreadful night of Egypt, when the destroying angel was abroad to slay God’s enemies. A bitter cry went up from house to house as the first-born of all Egypt—from Pharaoh on the throne, to the first-born of the woman behind the mill, and the slave in the dungeon—all fell dead in a moment! The angel sped with noiseless wings through every street of Egypt’s many cities; but there were some houses which he could not enter—he sheathed his sword and breathed no malediction there. What was it which preserved the houses? The inhabitants were not better than others; their habitations were not more elegantly built—there was nothing except the *bloodstain* on the lintel and on the two side posts—and it is written, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” There was nothing whatever which gained the Passover for Israel but the sprinkling of blood. The father of the house had taken a lamb and killed it, had caught the blood in a basin, and while the lamb was roasted that it might be eaten by every inhabitant of the house, he took a bunch of hyssop, stirred the basin of

blood, and went outside with his children and began to strike the posts, and to strike the door, and as soon as this was done, they were all safe, all safe—no angel could touch them—the fiends of hell themselves could not venture there. Beloved, see, *we* are preserved in Christ Jesus! Did not God see the blood before you and I saw it, and was not that the reason why He spared our forfeited lives when, like barren fig trees, we brought forth no fruit for Him? When we saw the blood, let us remember it was not *our* seeing it which really saved us—one sight of it gave us peace, but it was *God's* seeing it that saved us. "When *I* see the blood I will pass over you." And today, if my eye of faith is dim, and I see the precious blood so as to rejoice that I am washed, but I can scarcely see it, yet God can see the blood, and as long as the undimmed eyes of Jehovah look upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, He cannot smite one soul that is covered with its scarlet mantle. Oh, how precious is this blood-red shield! My soul, cower yourself down under it when the darts of hell are flying—this is the chariot, the covering of purple—let the storm come and the deluge rise, let even the fiery hail descend beneath that crimson pavilion my soul must rest secure, for what can touch me when I am covered with *His* precious blood?

The preserving power of that blood should make us feel how precious it is. Beloved, let me beg you to try and realize these points. You know I told you before, I cannot say anything new upon the subject, neither can I embody these old thoughts in new words; I would only spoil them, and be making a fool of myself by trying to make a display of myself and my own powers, instead of the precious blood. Let me ask you to get here, right under the shelter of the cross. Sit down, now, beneath the shadow of the cross, and feel, "I am safe. I am safe, O you devils of hell, or you angels of God—I could challenge you all, and say, 'Who shall separate me from the love of God

in Christ Jesus, or who shall lay anything to my charge, seeing that Christ has died for me?” When heaven is on a blaze, when earth begins to shake, when the mountains rock, when God divides the righteous from the wicked, happy will they be who can find a shelter beneath the blood! But where will you be who have never trusted in its cleansing power? You will call to the rocks to hide you, and to the mountains to cover you, but all in vain. God help you now, or even the blood will not help you then!

5. Fifthly, the blood of Christ is precious because of its **PLEADING PREVALENCE**. Paul says in the 12th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, at the 24th verse, “It speaks better things than that of Abel.” Abel’s blood pleaded and prevailed; its cry was, “Vengeance!” and Cain was punished. Jesus’ blood pleads and prevails; its cry is, “Father, forgive them!” and sinners are forgiven through it. When I cannot pray as I would, how sweet to remember that *the blood prays!* There is no voice in my tongue, but there is always a voice in the blood. If I cannot, when I bow before my God, get farther than to say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” yet my Advocate before the throne is not dumb because *I* am, and His plea has not lost its power because my faith in it may happen to be diminished. The blood is always alike prevalent with God. The wounds of Jesus are so many mouths to plead with God for sinners—what if I say they are so many *chains* with which love is lead captive, and sovereign mercy bound to bless every favored child? What if I say that the wounds of Jesus have become doors of divine grace through which divine love comes forth to the vilest of the vile, and doors through which our needs go up to God, and plead with Him that He would be pleased to supply them? Next time you cannot pray; next time you are crying, and striving, and groaning up in that upper room, praise the value of the precious

blood which makes intercession before the eternal throne of God!

6. Sixthly, the blood is precious where perhaps we little expect it to operate. It is precious, because of its **MELTING INFLUENCE** on the human heart. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one who mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one who is in bitterness for his first-born." There is a great complaint among sinners, when they are a little awakened, that they feel their hearts so hard. The blood is a mighty melter. Alchemists of old sought after a universal solvent—the blood of Jesus is that. There is no nature so stubborn that a sight of the love of God in Christ Jesus cannot melt it, if grace shall open the blind eye to see Christ. The stone in the human heart shall melt away when it is plunged into a bath of divine blood. Cannot you say, dear friends, that Toplady was right in his hymn—

"Law and terrors do but harden  
All the while they work alone.  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone?"

Sinner, if God shall lead you to believe this morning in Christ to save you—if, then, you will trust your soul in His hands to have it saved—that hard heart of yours will melt at once! You would think differently of sin, my friends, if you knew that Christ smarted for it. Oh, if you knew that out of those dear listless eyes there looked the loving heart of Jesus upon you, I know you would say, "I hate the sin that made Him mourn, and fastened Him to the accursed tree." I do not think that preaching the law generally softens men's hearts. Hitting men with a hard hammer may often drive the particles of a hard

heart more closely together, and make the iron yet more hard; but oh, to preach Christ's love—His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins, and to tell to sinners that there is life in a *look* at the crucified one—surely this will prove that Christ was exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins! Come *for* repentance, if you cannot come repenting! Come *for* a broken heart, if you cannot come *with* a broken heart! Come *to be melted*, if you are not melted. Come *to be wounded*, if you are not wounded.

7. But then comes in a seventh property of the precious blood. The same blood that melts has **A GRACIOUS POWER TO PACIFY**. John Bunyan speaks of the law as coming to sweep a chamber like a maid with a broom; and when she began to sweep, there was a great dust which almost choked people and got into their eyes; but then came the gospel with its drops of water, and laid the dust, and then the broom might be used far better. Now it sometimes happens that the law of God makes such a dust in the sinner's soul that nothing but the precious blood of Jesus Christ can make that dust lie still. The sinner is so disquieted that nothing can ever give him any relief except to know that Jesus died for him. When I felt the burden of my sin, I do confess all the preaching I ever heard never gave me one single atom of comfort. I was told to do this, and to do that, and when I had done it all, I had not advanced one inch farther. I thought I must *feel* something, or *pray* a certain quantity; and when I had done that, the burden was quite as heavy. But the moment I saw that there was nothing whatever for *me* to *do*, that *Jesus* did it long, long ago—that all my sins were put on *His* back, and that He suffered all I ought to have suffered—why then my heart had peace with God, real peace by believing peace through the precious blood!

Two soldiers were on duty in the citadel of Gibraltar, one of them had obtained peace through the precious blood of

Christ, the other was in very great distress of mind. It happened to be their turn to stand sentinel, both of them, the same night; and there are many long passages in the rock, which passages are adapted to convey sounds a very great distance. The soldier in distress of mind was ready to beat his breast for grief—he felt he had rebelled against God, and could not find how he could be reconciled; when, suddenly, there came through the air what seemed to him to be a mysterious voice from heaven saying these words, "The precious blood of Christ." In a moment, he saw it all—it was *that* which reconciled us to God—and he rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory! Now did those words come directly from God? No. They did as far as the effect was concerned—they did come from the Holy Spirit. Who was it that had spoken those words? Curiously enough, the other sentinel at the far end of the passage was standing still and meditating, when an officer came by, and it was his duty, of course, to give the word for the night, and with soldier-like promptness he did give it, but not accurately, for instead of giving the proper word, he was so taken up by his meditations that he said to the officer, "The precious blood of Christ." He corrected himself in a moment, but he had said it, and it had passed along the passage and reached the ear for which God meant it—and the man found peace and spent his life in the fear of God, being in later years the means of completing one of our excellent translations of the Word of God into the Hindu language. Who can tell, dear friends, how much peace you may give by only telling the story of our Savior! If I only had about a dozen words to speak, and knew I must die, I would say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The doctrine of substitution is the pith and marrow of the gospel, and if you can hold that forth, you will prove the value of the precious blood by its peace-giving power.

8. We can only spare a minute now upon **ITS SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE**. The Apostle tells us in the 9th chapter and the 14th verse that Christ sanctified the people by His own blood. Certain it is that the same blood which justifies by taking away sin does, in its later action, act upon the new nature, and lead it onward to subdue sin, and to follow out the commands of God. There is no motive for holiness as great as that which streams from the veins of Jesus; if you want to know why you should be obedient to God's will, my brethren, go and look upon Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and the love of Christ will constrain you, because you will thus judge, "That if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that we which live might not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again."

9. In the ninth place, another blessed property of the blood of Jesus is **ITS POWER TO GIVE ENTRANCE**. We are told that the high priest never went within the veil without blood; and surely we can never get into God's heart, nor into the secret of the Lord which is with them who fear Him, nor into any familiar communion with our great Father and Friend, except by the sprinkling of the precious blood of Jesus. "We have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand," but we never dare go a step towards God except as we are sprinkled with this precious blood. I am persuaded some of us do not come near to God because we forget the blood. If you try to have fellowship with God in your graces, your experiences, your believing—you will fail; but if you try to come near to God as you stand in Christ Jesus—you will have courage to come. And on the other hand, God will run to meet you when He sees you in the face of His Anointed. Oh, for power to get near to God! But there is no getting near to God except as we got near to the cross. Praise the blood, then, for its power of giving you nearness to God.

10. Tenthly—a hint only. The blood is very precious, in the 10th place, for **ITS CONFIRMING POWER**. No covenant, we are told, was ever valid unless victims were slain, and blood sprinkled; and it is the blood of Jesus which has ratified the new covenant, and made its promises sure to all the seed. Therefore it is called, "The blood of the everlasting covenant." The Apostle changes the figure, and he says that a testament is not of force except the testator is dead. The blood is a proof that the Testator died, and now the law holds good to every inheritor because Jesus Christ has signed it with His own gore. Beloved, let us rejoice that the promises are yes, and amen, for no other reason than this—because Christ Jesus died and rose again. Had there been no bowing of the head upon the tree, no slumbering in the sepulcher, no rising from the tomb, then the promises had been uncertain, fickle things—not "immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie"—and consequently, they could never have afforded strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. See, then, the confirming nature of the blood of Jesus and count it very precious.

11. I am almost done; but there remains another. It is the 11th one, and that is **THE INVIGORATING POWER** of the precious blood. If you want to know that, you must see it set forth as we often do when we cover the table with the white cloth, and put the bread and wine on it. What do we mean by this ordinance? We mean by it that Christ suffered for us, and that we, being already washed in His precious blood, and so made clean, do come to the table to drink wine as an emblem of the way in which we live, and feed upon His body and upon His blood. He tells us, "Except a man shall eat My flesh, and drink My blood, there is no life in him." We do, therefore, after a *spiritual* sort, drink His blood, and He says, "My blood is drink, indeed." Superior drink! Transcendent drink! Strengthening



drink—such drink as angels never taste though they drink before the eternal throne. Oh beloved, whenever your spirit faints, this wine shall comfort you! When your griefs are many, drink and forget your misery, and remember your sufferings no more! When you are very weak and faint, take not a *little* of this for your soul's sake, but drink *a full draught* of the wine on the lees, well refined, which was set abroad by the soldier's spike, and flowed from Christ's own heart! "Drink to the full; yes, drink abundantly O beloved," says Christ to the spouse; and do not linger when He invites. You see the blood has power without to cleanse, and then it has power within to strengthen. O precious blood, how many are your uses! May I prove them all!

**12.** Lastly and 12th—12 is the number of perfection. We have brought out a perfect number of its uses—the blood has **AN OVERCOMING POWER**. It is written in the Revelation, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." How could they do otherwise? He who fights with the precious blood of Jesus, fights with a weapon that will cut through soul and spirit, joints and marrow—a weapon that makes hell tremble, and makes heaven subservient, and earth obedient to the will of the men who can wield it! The blood of Jesus! Sin dies at its presence, death ceases to be death—hell itself would be dried up if that blood could operate there. The blood of Jesus! Heaven's gates are opened! Bars of iron are pushed back. The blood of Jesus! My doubts and fears flee, my troubles and disasters disappear! The blood of Jesus! Shall I not go on conquering, and to conquer as long as I can plead it? In heaven, this shall be the choice jewel which shall glitter upon the head of Jesus—that He gives to His people "Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb."

And now, is this blood to be had? Can it be gotten? Yes, it is FREE, as well as full of virtue—free to every soul who

believes. Whoever cares to come and trust in Jesus shall find the virtue of this blood in his case this very morning. Away from your own works! Turn those eyes of yours to the full atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid! And if God enables you, poor soul, this morning to say, "I take that precious blood to be my only hope," you are saved, and you may sing with the rest of us—

"Now, freed from sin, I walk at large;  
The Savior's blood's my full discharge.  
At His dear feet my soul I'll lay,  
A sinner saved and homage pay."

God grant it may be so, for His name's sake. Amen.

## **622 TRAVELING EXPENSES ON THE TWO GREAT ROADS – JONAH 1:3**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 2nd, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“So he paid the fare.” — Jonah 1:3**

AS A GENERAL RULE, wherever we go, whatever we do, we must “pay the fare.” Expenditure is connected with every act, work, and operation. The sun does not constantly flood this world, and all its sister spheres with light and heat without some kind of consumption within itself; nor does the earth yield her fruits of harvest except at the cost of the matter of which it is composed. By the force of wind and frost, the very “Mountain falling comes to nothing, and the rock is removed out of his place” (Job 14:18). The rivers do not reach the sea without wearing away their banks, and cutting channels in the earth through which their floods may flow; the raindrops, the generous gifts of heaven, have first been loaned from the treasury of the great deep; the air itself is constantly in process of consumption, and were it not that a fresh supply is daily being produced, even the atmosphere would become exhausted.

All the processes of nature involve a constant expenditure of power. Ponderous as is the engine of creation and little as it shows the fretting power of age, it is certain that in the whole

of its machinery, from its most stupendous wheel, down to its smallest valve, it is daily and necessarily experiencing an appointed amount of wear and tear. It is assuredly so with regard to the lesser world of man. The body cannot move a limb or contract a muscle without expense. The lifting of my hand, the pointing of my finger, the motion of my tongue, the stirring of my brain in thought, all cost something, and make a draught upon the inner store of strength—you cannot so much as gaze upon the world around you without some wear and tear of that marvelous optical instrument by which outward sights are brought to the inward mind. Friction operates on flesh, and bone, and sinew, and a higher friction acts on mind, and intellect, and passion, for even these grow weak with strain and age. “The fare thereof,” nature sternly demands before she will loose her cable or spread her sail to the breeze. He quarrels with God’s laws who expects something for nothing, and hopes to be served without offering a just remuneration, and to find friends without showing himself friendly. We *must* pay our fare, for the universe requires it—*we will pay it cheerfully*, for we are honest men.

This general rule of expenditure holds good when we enter the world of morals and commune with *spiritual* things. Man plucked the forbidden fruit, and dearly was that apple paid for in the fall of our entire race. The Lord redeemed us in His boundless love, but not without a price—the free mercy of God cannot work its way among men except heaven’s best treasure is spent to purchase men from bondage. Expense occurs everywhere in our salvation—“The price of pardon was the Savior’s blood.” “To buy our souls it cost His own”—

“There’s never a gift His hand bestows,  
But cost His heart a groan.”

Nor is it so in the kingdom of heaven only, for even if a man would pursue a foolhardy voyage across the sea of rebellion to the horrible land of perdition, in the ship of sin, he must “pay the fare.” Sinners, for that which is not bread, must spend their money, and for that, which profits not, must pay their labor. He who would be saved must take care to sit down and count the cost, lest, after having begun to build, he should not be able to finish it. But let him not think that he is alone in his expending, for the transgressor’s bill of costs is no light one. War of any sort is costly, but ungodly men will find that a war with heaven is the dearest of all. God’s house, like the palace of Solomon, needs a large income to sustain its daily feasting—but it is not like the house of evil which makes a beggar of every man who comes within its doors.

I. I shall, this morning, commence my discourse by endeavoring to direct your attention to **THE COST OF TRAVELING ON THE BROAD ROAD TO HELL.**

Phocian paid for the poison which killed him—and the sinner pays dearly for the sin which proves his ruin. The worldling often taunts the Christian because he expends his money on his religion. The Christian may well reply to the sinner, “I wish that your taunts were more true, for I fear that I do not spend one-tenth as much in the service of God as you do in the service of your vices.” Very few except the most generous of Christians could venture to say that they spend as much upon their God as degenerates squander upon their lusts.

1. Let us begin to add up the bill! We are met at once with a heavy item. The man who makes the world his idol, and forgets God, has at once, at the start of his voyage, to pay down, and place in a sinking fund *all hope of God’s favor and all expectation of the blessings which it brings*. He cannot run contrary to God’s will and command, and then expect that God will be his friend, and prosper his designs. If I set myself up in rebellion against

heaven's Great King, I cannot suppose that He will make it His constant care to promote my interests, nor dare I dream that He will aid and abet me in my designs of evil. "With the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate" (Psa 18:26), is the revelation of Scripture. "If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you," is the voice of the God of Sinai. The man throws down the glove of battle against the Lord, and his Creator will let him know that it is, "Woe unto him who strives with his Maker." Long-suffering is Jehovah, and He does not smite the rebel with speedy ruin, but still it is written, "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turns not, He will whet His sword, He has bent His bow and made it ready." The good man sees a gracious *providence* smiling at his side; he knows that, "All things work together for good to them who love God." And although the wheels of providence are too high for him to understand their revolutions, yet he knows that they are full of eyes, marking the wisdom and care of his Father in heaven. He sings with rapture—

"Your ways, O Lord, with wise design,  
Are framed upon Your throne above;  
And every dark and bending line  
Meets in the center of Your love."

The Almighty God is the believer's refuge, and beneath His wings he finds perpetual shelter. Not so the sinner. In the court of providence he is an outlaw, and can claim no right of protection. How shall providence care for him who cares not for God? He is under its ban, and he shall, before long, learn that, "They who plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His nostrils are they consumed." The ungodly cannot claim the privilege which Eliphaz ascribes to the righteous—"He shall

deliver you in six troubles: yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. At destruction and famine you shall laugh: neither shall you be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For you shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.” On the contrary, providence may justly remind him of his sins, and say, “Call now, if there is any who will answer you; and to which of the saints will you turn?” Our gracious God has given no charge to His angels to keep the sinner in all his ways; those ministering spirits have no commission to bear him up lest he dash his foot against a stone; rather, the forces of nature are restrained by almighty mercy, or else the very stars in their courses, and the waters in the rivers would fight against the wicked, as they did against Sisera in days of yore.

The Christian has *the presence* of God also to rejoice in. Mungo Park, when lost in the wilderness, observed a tiny piece of moss, and marking how beautifully it was fashioned, he recollected, “God is here! My Father is here!” So does the Christian. He is never out of his Father’s house, and consequently he is forevermore at home. The lines of Thompson are ours, not merely as poetry, but as matter of fact—

“Should fate command me to the farthest verge  
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,  
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun  
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam  
Flames on the Atlantic isles; ’tis naught to me;  
Since God is ever present, ever felt,  
In the void waste as in the city full;  
And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.  
When even at last the solemn hour shall come,  
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,

I cheerfully will obey; there with new powers  
Will rising wonders sing. I cannot go  
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around,  
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons,  
From seeming evil still educing good.  
And better there again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.”

It is not so with the sinner? The presence of God is to him dreadful. If there were some valley of confusion where God’s power is not known, its congenial desolation would become the sinner’s heaven—the place where God’s presence shall gleam upon him with irresistible force will be his hell.

Moreover, the sinner gives up every *promise* of God in choosing the road to perdition. There is not a word in this book of divine love which can breathe comfort into the sinner’s ear while he chooses his own ways. It is a book of threats and of curses to the impenitent. It woos as a mother would call her wandering child; it has a gentle voice forever broken, and contrite spirit, but it thunders like Sinai’s own self against every hardened sinner who will not turn from his wicked way. O unbeliever, you have renounced, by the very fact of your remaining without God and without Christ, all possession in the rich promises of God! You have sunk the immense capital upon the interest of which the Christian lives in time, and in the enjoyment of which he hopes to be blest throughout eternity. You, who know how to add, mark this one item of expenditure to begin with, and guess how heavy is the fare of sin!

2. In the next place, they who follow the course of sin make a great expenditure of their *time*. However, that I dare say they do not think much of, for time to them is a mere drug of no clear value. Many of the ungodly seek after pastimes, kill-times,



and all sorts of inventions by which they may get rid of time, which to us appears sadly too little for our daily work. The precious privilege of existence is to them a nuisance. The pictured gallery of life is to them a prison or corridor through which they would hasten as speedily as may be, forgetting its end and where it leads. Ah, brethren, if they were wise, they would comprehend that time is the stuff which life is made of, and that this life is the only season in which we can be made qualified for the enjoyments of eternity. If men understood it, they would sooner cast pearls to swine than give their days to sin, and their nights to rioting. If time is the chrysalis of eternity who, but a fool would treat it with contempt? He is the worst of prodigals who wastes that most precious of all treasures, his time; but what hours does fashion demand? What days will the debauched and the profligate give to their sensual indulgence? But what am I saying? It is needless to single out the more bold of transgressors—the rule is universal—the sinner's life is all waste, for it is unconsecrated by faith, unblessed by God, and is therefore all lavished for nothing on shadows and dreams.

3. It must not be forgotten that some ungodly men expend a deal of *labor* to gratify their evil desires. The way to hell may be downhill, but it is not all smooth. There are, Hills Difficulty, even for the ungodly. "The way of transgressors is hard." Therefore the Savior says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden," for sinners labor and their sins prove to be a heavy burden. The same Hebrew and Greek word, stands both for "laboring," and for "sin," for sinning is often difficult. As the prophet says, "The people labor in the very fire, and weary themselves for vanity." Though men call sin pleasure, who does not know that it often jades and wearies the man worse than the hardest toil! How the proud man toils for honor! How the miser pinches himself for gold! How the thief

exhausts his ingenuity to get at another man's wealth! How hard is the harlot's drudgery! How heavy is the yoke of Satan!

4. Sinners, again, are frequently put by their sins to a great expense *of their actual substance*. Their money finds feather's for its wings in the gratification of their desires. Who can be a drunk without coming to poverty, or lessening his estate? Who fills the cup to the brim without before long clothing himself with rags, and bringing his household to poverty? The prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living—who can do otherwise if he entertains a host of greedy sins? God only knows how much of the poverty of this land is due to nothing else but drunkenness. No doubt there always will be some poverty which may claim our charity, for the poor shall never cease out of the land; but still, it is to be feared that three-fourths of all the poverty of this great city is to be traced more or less directly to the gin palace, and the beer shops. Drunkenness is a “greedy sin and like the horseleech it cries, ‘Give, give.’” England, with all its generosity, does not give anything like so much to the cause of missions, or for the maintenance of religion, as men spend in intoxication. Then look at other sins, how costly they are! Consider those amusements of the world which many defend as being no offense to public morals, but which the spiritual avoid as being unfit occupations for heirs of heaven. Even these are far from being inexpensive. I noticed yesterday an advertisement in the newspaper for boxes at the opera, for a certain term, to be let for two hundred guineas! What would people think if a pew in any place of worship were only to be had on terms of so heavy a subscription? Why, that sum would pay the charges all the year round of full many a place of worship! And yet, this amount represents probably but a portion of the expense involved in attendance at the theater. There are far greater drains upon the purse than those implied in missionary societies, ministers, chapels and bible-women.

Who has not heard how fast debauchery burns the candle at both ends? Is it not said of the prodigal, that he devoured his living with harlots? This sin has brought many a man of wealth and fortune down to shiver like a beggar on a dunghill! “Remove your way far from her, and come not near the door of her house...lest strangers be filled with your wealth, and your labors be in the house of a stranger.” He who sins must pay the fare.

5. Nor is this all. Those men who go far into sin, and carry out the desires of their hearts soon find that there is an *expense of health*. How many a man has rottenness in his bones, and disease in his heart’s core brought on by gluttony, drunkenness, and vice? Well may men pray that they may be delivered from the sins of their youth and their former transgressions; for they are in a sad plight, who, mourn at the last, when their flesh and their body are consumed. It is not God who has thickly sown this world with disease and sorrow—man’s iniquity has done it! Men cast seed of weed and corn cockle into the furrows of life, and when they spring up, they complain of the appointments of God, whereas, they are the result of their own sins! And there is no injustice in the rule, that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” “His bones are full of the sins of his youth which shall lie down with him in the dust.” The fare, the full fare of sin’s voyage, must be paid.

6. Another expense and that one which ought not to be forgotten, is the *loss of peace of mind*. A man cannot indulge in sin, and yet go to his bed with a quiet conscience; at least, if he can do so, this callousness is of itself a still greater evil. For the most part, men start back at the ghosts of their own crimes. “Terrors make the wicked afraid on every side, and drive them to their feet.” Even the respectable sinner whose life is outwardly moral,

but whose heart is far from God, cannot avoid some qualms and disturbance of mind. If I am not one with God, if I am not washed in Jesus' blood, if I am not sanctified by God's Holy Spirit, there is an aching void within me which the world can never fill; there is an inward monitor which tells me, "There is something that you need, a something that the world cannot give you, which you cannot earn for yourself. How is it that you are living in the neglect of it?" "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him...He wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand." Until I was saved by divine grace, I can truly say I had no lasting peace, but now my peace is like a river. How a trumpet will often blanch the sinner's cheek; the cholera comes, and how the man trembles because death is at work next door; how fearful he is when he stands at the grave's brink, and looks down upon the coffin of some companion with whom he has spent many a boisterous hour. Ah, you cannot have peace! You cannot have peace till you have Christ! You cannot be truly happy till you have given your souls to Jesus! The apple may look fair, but it is rotten within. You may talk of joy, but you know it not if you know not Jesus. Surely to lose this priceless pearl is an item in the bill of no mean magnitude—

"Peace has sweets  
That Hybla never knew; it sleeps on down  
Culled gently from beneath the cherub's wing."

Who would throw this away for vexing, mocking, deceiving, lying vanities?

7. The worst expense, however, we have only hinted at. The man who goes to hell must pay the fare in another way—*he loses his soul*. What that loss may be no mortal tongue can tell.

If one could come again from the pit of hell, as once the rich man proposed, perhaps he might tell us in sorrowful tones what it is to be cast out from God into the place where there is not a drop of water to cool the fire-tormented tongue; but it is not for us even to conceive what the place of torment may be. It is enough to hear and profit by the question of the Savior—“What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” What is Caesar the better for his dominions? What is Croesus the better for his wealth? What is the philosopher the better for his wisdom, now that he is forever cast away from the favor of God? In fact, the greater the wretched beings were on earth, the more terrible will their doom be in eternity, when, looking from their beds of flame, the lesser sinners shall cry, “Have you become like one of us? Is the lofty one brought low? Is the proud one humbled? Is the boaster made to feel in the torment of this fire that he is no greater than the rest of us?” I say, the more honor, and dignity, and glory, the man obtained on earth, the more terrible his shame and disgrace when, his soul being lost, he is cast into the pit of hell forever! Let us, then, if we have been deluded by the pleasures of sin, or have been tempted in any way to forget God because we have thought that the way of the flesh was easy—let us think awhile that we shall have to pay the fare, and that the fare is far too expensive to be paid by men of understanding. We dare not risk soul and body, life and death, heaven and hell, judgment and eternity merely for the sake of those paltry, passing, delusive joys which are all that the world can pretend to offer.

**II.** Let us change our strain and say a little upon **THE EXPENSE OF AVOIDING DUTY.**

Jonah's duty was to go to Nineveh and preach the word—he preferred not to go; he therefore shirked the work, went down to Joppa, and paid his fare to go to Tarshish. I hope we

are not in the habit of doing the same, but yet there are occasions when even God's servants shrink from duty, and seem willing to forget that where God calls, they are bound to go. Possibly this remark may apply to some minister who may come under the word. He is called to bear his protest against a certain sin, and he thinks to himself, "If I so speak, some of those who hear me will never come again; I may lose rich subscribers; I will not say a word on that point." Or, he has it laid upon him to cry against the monstrous evils in the State Church—but he puts his finger to his lips and remains silent, inwardly calculating—"I had better hold my peace on that subject, for I may risk my popularity." Such a minister should reflect that it is a very expensive thing to try to flee to Tarshish when you ought to go to Nineveh, for a man cannot avoid duty without expense. I have known good people who will say, "I know such-and-such is what I ought to do, but still, you see, the path is very difficult, and I do not feel called upon to make so great a sacrifice." Well, friend, if you do not make the sacrifice when God demands it of you, He has other ways of taking away your treasured goods. In the long run you will find it far more expensive to shun the work and will of God, than at once to give yourself to it. You will be a loser by your prudence; you shall find that the Scriptural rule holds good, "He who would lose his life shall save it, but he who would save his life shall lose it."

If you are willing to be a loser for Christ, you shall be a gainer! But if you insist upon being held harmless, and try at all costs to make provision for the flesh, then you shall find that before long you will have to pay the fare to your own grievous hurt and injury. What did Jonah lose? Jonah had to pay as part of his fare *the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love*. He went down into the bottom of the vessel and hid himself from sight. I think I see him, that Jonah, who a few days after, walked

with all the boldness of a lion through the streets of Nineveh, crying, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” That Jonah who bearded Nineveh’s haughty monarch, and was not afraid to tell him that in 40 days his city would be overthrown; that Jonah goes sneaking down among the goods at the bottom of the hold, for fear anybody should see him, and there hides his coward, craven head. Poor Jonah, you have lost the hallowed fellowship of your God; you have lost His presence, and consequently your courage has all oozed out of you! This is a dear price which you have paid for shunning Nineveh! When you and I serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, we can remember that our God is with us, and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us, what does it matter? But oh, the minute we start back, and begin to seek our own inventions and appeal to our own wisdom, we are all at sea without a pilot, and our great Helper withdraws from us; then may we bitterly lament and groan out, “O my God, where have You gone? How could I have been so foolish, as to shun Your service, and in this way to lose all the brightness of Your face? This is a price too high! Let me return to my allegiance, and to Your presence.”

In the next place, Jonah lost *all peace of mind*. When he was in Nineveh, crying, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” he was not afraid of the edge of the sword, nor of the tyrant’s rage—he felt that he was doing God’s work, and he knew that when on God’s errands he was perfectly safe. His heart beat gently, like that of a man in a happy, tranquil frame of mind, wearing the herb called heart’s ease in his bosom. But now, down there, in the hold of the vessel, his heart is palpitating—he does not know what may happen, and until sleep happily comes in to ease the distress of his mind, he is like a poor hunted staff, panting with alarm.

These were two great things to lose—God’s presence and his own peace of mind—but these were not all his damage and injury; He was now *brought into great peril*—he must be thrown into the sea. In all likelihood he will meet with a watery grave. Had he gone to Nineveh, that would not have occurred, He would have been under the care of God’s special providence there, but now the winds and waves threaten him. With what a splash he falls into the deep! As we see him engulfed, let us, with holy caution, shun the dangerous way of disobedience. Other men may escape the chastisements of God in this world, but not the Lord’s own children. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

Now, too, *he is brought into great affliction of soul*. He tells us that he “cried by reason of affliction.” He compares his state to the “belly of hell.” He was brought into great depths of distress; a miracle interposed to save his life, but not to cheer his spirit. Like the Savior, of whom he was a type, he was exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy, almost unto death. Sin soon destroys a believer’s comfort. It is the deadly upas tree from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace.

Jonah, too, had *lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case*. He could not turn to the promise of God that He would keep him, for he was not in God’s ways; he could not say, “Lord, I am Your servant,” for then conscience would have said, “Yes, and a pretty servant, too!” He could not say, “Lord, I am on Your errand!” for conscience would have said, “No, you are on your own!” He could not say, “Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them”—no, for there would have been a reply, “You are not here in the discharge of duty; you flew in the teeth of the Most High; you sought to escape from



a little difficulty—you tried to get away from the presence of God altogether, and you have prepared all this for yourself. If the draught is bitter, you mixed it; if the fruit is sharp, you planted the tree; if this harvest is terrible, you sowed the seed—you are reaping your own deeds—you are being filled with your own ways.” Poor Jonah, poor Jonah, to be in such a state as this!

Then here is another point, *be had to go to Nineveh after all*—and so will you. You may kick, but when God means you to do His work, you will be made to do it. The ox-goad has already been thrust into you because you hate the yoke; you do not like it, and you kick against it, and the only result is that it is driven further into you. Saul, Saul, it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, for with all your kicking and rebelling, you will have to go where you were originally ordered to go; you might as well go at first—you will go with better grace; you will go with your Master’s comfortable presence; but you will have to go one way or another. Many men have found this true. They have struggled against duty, and perhaps, year after year they have drawn back from it, finding miserable excuses for their consciences; but they never prospered in business, they could not get on in the world, they had trouble on trouble, and at last it came to this—they had to go back to the very place where they were 10 or 20 years ago, and there they discharged the duty which they had been so long seeking to avoid, which had proved a burdensome stone to them until they were rid of it by yielding to its demands. Now, my dear brothers, do not play the Jonah, for you will have to pay the fare of it. If you know your duty, do it. I may be speaking very pointedly to some of you. “I would have to sever the bonds of many a fond connection.” Do it for Christ’s sake. “I would have to leave the camp and go outside of it, take up a very heavy cross, and bear Christ’s reproach.” You may as well do it now as by-and-by, for

you will have to do it. “But,” says one, “this business of mine—I have nothing left to live upon; I feel it is a bad business, but I do not want to give it up just yet.” You will have to do so sooner or later, you may as well do it now, before, like Jonah, you have had to pay for your wit. Remember, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they who keep His commandments.” May God the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom which comes from above, which will lead you to sit as a child at the feet of Jesus, and learn His ways. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” “But hearken diligently unto His commandments, and then shall your peace be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

**III. A few words upon another point—there is AN EXPENSE CONNECTED WITH GOING TO HEAVEN.**

It is estimated at a very high rate by some who say that the road is good enough, but the tolls are too high. Others pretend to believe that religion is only a scheme for putting money into ministers’ pockets, whereas I can truly say for one, that what I receive for my ministry is not a 10th of what I could readily earn in an engagement infinitely less laborious and harassing than my present position; although, let it be added, I would not leave my ministry for 10,000 worlds! Let us think over this matter of expense, and begin with an old story. “An aged couple, in the vicinity of London, who, in the early part of life, were poor, but who, by the blessing of God upon their industry, enjoyed a comfortable independency in their old age, was called upon by a Christian minister who solicited their contributions to a charity. The old lady was disposed to make out some excuse, and to answer in the negative, both for her husband and herself; and therefore replied, “Why, Sir, we have lost a great deal by religion since we began; my husband knows that

very well.” And wishing to obtain her husband’s consent to the assertion, she said, “Have we not, Thomas?” Thomas, after a long and solemn pause, replied, “Yes, Mary, we *have* lost a great deal by our religion! I have lost a great deal by my religion. Before I got religion, Mary, I had got a water pail in which I carried water, and that you know I lost many years ago; and then I had an old slouched hat, a patched old coat, and mended shoes and stockings; but I have lost them, also, long ago. And, Mary, you know that poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk and quarrelling with you; and that you know I have lost. And then I had a burdened conscience and a wicked heart; and then I had 10,000 guilty feelings and fears; but all are lost, completely lost, and, like a millstone, cast into the deepest sea. And, Mary, you have been a loser, too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had a washing tray in which you washed for hire; and God Almighty blessed your industry; but since we got religion, you have lost your washing tray. And you had a gown and bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear; but you have lost them long ago. And you had many an aching heart concerning me, at times; but those you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost, and even more, for what we lose by our religion, Mary, will be our eternal gain.” We need not add the preacher did not go away without substantial proof that Thomas deemed his losses for religion his most weighty obligations to the goodness of Almighty God as the richest gift of divine grace on earth, and the most authentic pledge of glory in the world to come!

If some of us were to look back upon what religion has cost us, we might cast up the amount with very much the same result. Where were you apt to spend your Sundays once, some of you? Where would some few of you, have been on other occasions?—at the race course, at the theater—yes, and in the

brothel. But now, you are washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus! This is what your religion has cost you—the giving up of nothing that made you truly happy—but only renouncing that which pretended to make you happy, but which was ruining your soul forever! The first expense of religion is that *it takes away from men spurious joys*, and gives them real ones; it takes away from them shadows, and gives them substance.

Then, again, the expense of your religion has been this—some of you have given a good deal of your time to the cause of Christ; others of you have devoted a considerable portion of your money to it, but after all that you or any of us have ever given, I am sure we can say religion has cost us nothing which we did not give cheerfully—and it has asked of us nothing which it was not our happiness to render! We have felt a greater joy in giving than in withholding—a greater bliss in serving God than in being idle. Moreover our generosity has always been repaid to us with interest, for our God will be in no man's debt. Here is a specimen of what has been our experience from the pen of a tradesman: "Some years ago I heard a sermon from the words, 'Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse' (Mal 3:10). I cannot describe how my mind was impressed with the manner in which Jehovah here condescended to challenge His people when He says, 'And prove Me now,' etc. Suffice it to say that the subject made such an impression, that I found it my duty to do more for the cause of God than I had ever done. I did so; and on closing that year's accounts, I found that I had gained more than in any two years preceding it. Some time afterwards I thought the Redeemer's cause had an additional claim, as the place in which we worshipped Him needed some repairs. The sum I then gave was £20; and in a very little time afterwards, I received £40 which I had long given up as lost." Our Master's service is our liberty; we count it our joy to run

in the way of His commandments; and if the worldling pities us, and says, “Poor man, how he must deny himself!” We reply, “In one sense it is true, but in another, our best self is fed, and satisfied, and feasted, when we deny self; the duties we perform are not performed as duties, but as *privileges*; we do not run into them at all because we feel forced to do so, but because we love them. We confess that religion has cost us our spirit, our soul, our body; and our only regret is we have not more that we can give to the cause of Christ. We think we can stand at the foot of the Savior’s cross and say—

“Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain I count my loss,  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His cross.  
Yes, and I must and will esteem  
All things but loss for Jesus’ sake;  
O may my soul be found in Him,  
And of His righteousness partake!”

Religion, then, takes away from us nothing but what we are glad to lose; and it asks nothing of us but what we are too glad to give; and it returns to us in 10,000 ways all that it takes from us. It gives us blessings of the upper and of the nether springs, it comforts us in life, it cheers us in death; it makes us so happy that we can say with Watts—

“I would not change my blessed estate  
For all the world calls good or great;  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”

**IV. In the last place, THE TRUE FARE OF GODLINESS IS  
ALREADY PAID—NOT BY US, BUT BY OUR LORD JESUS.**

Jonah paid his fare from Joppa to Tarshish, but I never find that he paid any fare back. The conveyance which brought him to land was far cheaper than the ship of Tarshish, though not quite as comfortable. He came back to land with no expense to himself whatever. So we must pay much, and do much in order to be cast away; but the way of eternal life and salvation is perfectly free. When Jonah was thrown out into the midst of the sea, the whale did not swallow him because he was a man of money, or because he was a man of merit; he was just a needy, destitute sinner, subject to the wrath of God as expressed in that tempest, and in that storm, and in that boiling sea; and there came the friendly fish which carried him into a living grave for three days, that his life might be preserved. And this is very much like our salvation—salvation by death and burial with Jesus. We flee; we trust by our self-righteousness to escape from the tempest of God's wrath, but we cannot; at last we feel that we are cast right out into the sea to perish and God's anger, as we think, is hot against us. There is no good thing in us, nothing upon which we can rely; we see no hope of escape. Just then the death of Christ, which was our greatest crime—which seems as though it would destroy us—takes us into its friendly shelter, and in it we go to the bottoms of the mountains. In it we descend till all the waves and billows of God's wrath have rolled over us; and in it we are securely landed, to praise the name and love of God. When our extremity comes, and there is none to help, then God prepares the way of deliverance for us, His people.

Hear me for one moment, my brethren, this morning. We have sinned. God help us to feel the sin! Grievously have we offended against God by flying in His face, and going where He would not have us go! Can we return? We have paid our

fare to go to the place of destruction, but we have no means to pay our fare to heaven. Penniless, stripped of all hope in ourselves, is there any way by which we can return—by which we can find eternal life? There is! There is—if we give ourselves up wholly to God, confessing our sins, and if our soul rests alone upon the finished work of the great salvation provided in Christ Jesus. We need not fear because we have nothing. Our God, who has everything, asks nothing from us; He does not save us because we are righteous, but because He is gracious; He will not deliver us because there is something good in us—but because there is everything good in Himself. Let me say to those of you who are sleeping this morning, careless of your fate—if you sleep much longer, you may wake up where your waking will be terrible. What are you doing, O you sleepers! Rise! I remind you of your future doom, of your present danger. O, Spirit of God, awaken them! And if awakened, you cry, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer comes, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Though you can see no means of escape, yet there is a means provided by God! And when you are cast out from the ship, have left all other confidence, and think that God’s sea of wrath will cover you up—then Christ, who has been prepared of old as our Great Deliverer, shall take you, and bear you safely to the land of eternal glory. I would God that you were made to forsake the way of the destroyer, and led in the way of peace, that He might have all the praise forever.

May He bless these poor, feeble, but well-intended remarks, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

## **623 SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS – JOB 1:8**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 9th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered My  
servant Job.” — Job 1:8**

HOW VERY UNCERTAIN are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere except in heaven! Job’s prosperity promised as much stability as anything can beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, and asses, and cattle. He had not to go to markets, and fairs, and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale round about his own homestead, and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity needed nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood tide—where was the cause which could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which foretold no good to Job’s prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite



Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the evil one boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth—insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will, and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered and unchallenged. When the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold, and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job; that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity, and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of heaven; the evil one defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job, told Him that the Patriarch's integrity was due to his prosperity, that he served God, and eschewed evil from sinister motives, because he found his conduct profitable to himself. The God of heaven took up the challenge of the evil one, and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job's integrity, and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job's wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort. A second interview between the Lord and His fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation; and the Great One, defied by Satan, permitted him to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, till the prince became worse than a pauper, and he who was rich and happy, was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot, and forced to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd to gain a little relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. "He has founded it upon the floods," is David's description of this

world; and, if it is founded upon the floods, can you wonder that it often changes? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars—remember that “CHANGE” is written on the forefront of nature. Say not, therefore, “My mountain stands firm—it shall never be moved.” The glance of Jehovah’s eyes can shake your mountain into dust; the touch of His foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax, and to be altogether on a smoke. “Set your affection on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God,” and let your heart and your treasure be “where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.” The words of Bernard may here instruct us—“That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed) none can take from you: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable.”

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept thus much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job?” Let us deliberate, first, *in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God*. Secondly, *let us notice what it is that he considers about them*. And then, thirdly, *let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that One who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense*.

**I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF GOD?**

Certainly not in the usual biblical meaning of the term, “consider.” “O Lord, consider my trouble.” “Consider my meditation.” “Blessed is he who considers the poor.” Such consideration implies goodwill and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favor. In that sense, Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; all his considerations

of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom, love, and kindness. He does not honor God by what he sees in His works, or in His people. It is not with him, "Go to the ant; consider her ways and be wise." But he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. *He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself.* A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would be, if it paid them better than fidelity. When Satan looks at the Christian, and finds him faithful to God, and to His truth, he considers him as we would consider a phenomenon—perhaps despising him for his folly, but yet marveling at him, and wondering how he can act thus. "I," he seems to say, "a prince, a peer of God's parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah—I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven—I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne—how is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken! These are *earthen* vessels, and yet I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory—what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God who does not bless and exalt them as He did me?"

It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an

unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul, and when he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted—yet rejoicing and full of glory. *He* goes up and down through the world and possesses great power, and there are many faithful followers to serve him, yet he has not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon a bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the believer's soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that *he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself?* “*They* are not pure,” he says—“these blood-bought ones—these elect from before the foundations of the world—*they* still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed His head, and gave up the ghost—even they offend!” How must he chuckle with such delight as he is capable of over the secret sins of God's people, and if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful, and therein like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer's heart cries to him, “My father! My father!” and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the “old man” in the Christian, and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold—the force and vehemence with which it struggles for the mastery—the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it puts forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil's eyes ever rest upon is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God.

In this respect, he had very little to consider in God's true servant, Job.

Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that *he views the Lord's people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom*; and just as the engineer, endeavoring to make a railway, keeps his eyes very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years to bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers most such men as Job. Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," says he, "if it were not for that monk! He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates and mauls my first-born son, the Pope. If I could get rid of him, I would not mind though 50,000 smaller saints stood in my way." He is sure to consider God's servant, if there are "none like he," if he stands out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who, by their regimentals, are discovered to be the officers, and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, "For," he says, "if the standard-bearer falls, then shall the victory be more readily gained to our side, and our opponents shall be readily put to rout." If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones, and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times, there is sure to be a contention after the fat valleys where the wheat sheaves are plenteous, and where the farmer's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honor God most, Satan will

struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from His crown if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself. He considers, then, God's people; viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way, or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights; there would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon, if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; therefore his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men.

It needs not much wisdom to discern that *the great objective of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury*. I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too wise for that. He has been foiled so often when he has attacked *God's* people, that he can hardly think he shall be able to destroy the *elect*, for you remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him, spoke to Haman in this way—"If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him." He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain; and it strikes me if he could be absolutely certain that any one soul were chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonor it. It is, however, most likely that Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do! He can only judge, as we do, by outward actions— though he can form a more accurate judgment than we through longer experience—and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude; yet into God's book of secret decrees, his black eyes can never peer. By their fruits he knows them, and we know them in the same manner. Since, however, *we* are often mistaken in our judgment, *he*, too, may be; and it seems to me

that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavor to destroy them all—not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goes about seeking whom he *may* devour, and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence. Someone may say, “How can one devil do this?” He does not do it by himself. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan—we may not be notable enough among men to be worth *his* trouble; but he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his command and control, and as the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan—“he says to this spirit, ‘Do this,’ and he does it, and to his servant, ‘Go,’ and he goes.” Thus, all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the great enemy of souls, and that with a view of destroying them—for he would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan’s objective is to worry. He does not like to see God’s people happy.

I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts, and fears, and grief, and despondency as the evidences of God’s people. “Ah,” says the devil, “preach on! You are doing *my* work well, for I like to see God’s people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows, and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely.” My dear friends, let us watch against those deceptive temptations which pretend to make us *humble*, but which really aim at making us *unbelieving*. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how He proves His love in the gift of His dear Son, Jesus. Banish, then, all your ill surmising, and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with joy. “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come

before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms.” “Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy all you who are upright in heart.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice.” Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, “Let us sing Psalms, and spite the devil,” and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right—for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise. Beloved brethren, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter. And in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honor of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonor the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it, and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of His praise. “He who offers praise, glorifies Me,” says God; and so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he *spoilt his usefulness*? Many a believer has fallen, not to break his neck—that is impossible—but he has broken some important bone, and he has gone limping to his grave! We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the church, who did run well, but suddenly, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin, and their names were never mentioned in the church again except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily. Friend, beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house of God, are very dear to us, and we cannot spare you. As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honor and oh, we would not be made



to mourn and lament—we do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry, “Aha! Aha! So would we have it,” for alas, there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice and the sons of the Philistines should triumph. Oh, may God grant us divine grace, as a church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst, he may gain no advantage over us, and after having considered and considered again, and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls!

Before I leave this point, I would like to say that perhaps it may be suggested, “How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of His people by the evil one?” One answer, doubtless, is that God knows what is for His own glory, and that He gives no account of His matters—that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil—it does not seem agreeable with His having done so to destroy Satan; but He gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between divine grace and craftiness. Besides, be it remembered that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God; Fenelon says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence, and I may add, they are the horrible sound in the sentinel’s ear which is sure to keep him awake. An experiential divine remarks that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all; for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake—whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak—and though the spirit may be willing, yet we

may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs bark at them. The howling of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watchtower, and be made the means of preservation from other ills. Let us "Be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour." And let us, who are in a prominent position, be permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, "Brethren, pray for us," that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

## **II. Secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD'S PEOPLE?**

It cannot be said of him, as of God, that he knows us altogether; but since he has been now nearly 6,000 years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time, and having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them. Satan watches and considers, first of all, *our peculiar infirmities*. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse dealer do with a horse; and he soon finds out where we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I see it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters, and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from head to toe, so that he will say of this man, "His infirmity is lust," or of that other, "He has a quick temper," or of this other, "He is proud," or of that other, "He is slothful." The eye of malice is very quick to

perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering ram, and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity, but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes, and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through, and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care, also, to consider *our frames and states of mind*. If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we would be more than a match for him—he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding—the fiend will then assail them; others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything; and others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil's vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a temperature, and another at a different temperature, those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while another reaches the boiling point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil as soon as they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil, indeed—not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, and adapts his bait to his prey; and he knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of souls comes

upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following, which is much to the point— “The chameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, takes upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus does the color of the rock under which he lurks, that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger.” In like manner, Satan turns himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, so that he may the sooner draw us into his net; he sails with every wind, and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matters of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Has our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold-spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempts us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempts us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempts us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempts us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempts us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempts us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus does he lay his traps, that one way or the other, he may ensnare.

He also takes care to consider *our position among men*. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone; they are the subjects, then, of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes; perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company, I never could be led into sin—into another society, I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity that those of

us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin starting forth; and others are so somber that if they meet a brother of like mold, they are pretty sure, between them, to invent an evil report of the goodly land. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks; he will pounce upon you, swooping like a bird of prey from the sky who has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success.

How, too, will he consider *our condition in the world*! He looks at one man and says, "That man has property—it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man, and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary's temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine—I do not think you could; and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours—though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us, and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all are in peculiar peril—I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot be a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them! Let us have something to do! Let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make

room for the devil! Industry will not make us gracious, but the lack of industry may make us vicious. Always have something on the anvil or in the fire—

“In books, or work, or healthful play,  
I would be busy too,  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do.”

So Watts taught us in our childhood, and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, or works, or such recreations as are necessary for health should occupy our time; for if I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices *all the objects of our affection*. I doubt not when he went round Job’s house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweler’s premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window and fastening—they fail not to look at the next-door house—for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job’s position, he thought to himself, “There are the camels and the oxen, the asses and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably.” “Then,” he thought, “there are the three daughters! There are the seven sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting—that will afflict the father’s mind the more severely, for he will say, ‘O that they had died when they had been *praying*, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.’ I will put down, too, in the inventory,” says the devil, “his wife—I dare say I shall need her,” and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done

what Job's wife did—none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stingingly—or, if she meant it very kindly—none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job's own wife, "Bless God and die," as it may be read, or, "Curse God and die." Ah, Satan, you have plowed with Job's heifer, but you have not succeeded; Job's strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else you might have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job's personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at in poor men outside the city gates.

Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. "Ah," he says, "there is a place for my wounding him." Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell's arrows shall be stored till the time may come—and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbor, and her who lies in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions—all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord's people. We have snares everywhere; in our bed, and at our table; in our house, and in the street. There are dangers and traps in company; there are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world! There are traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy! The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream—but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done with the Black Prince forever and ever!

**III. Satan considered, but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION.**

In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fuse and blow up God's building, but all the while God is undermining him, and He blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge, but less wisdom than any other creature, he is more subtle than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called *subtlety*, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom—it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God's purpose—for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. *The Lord had considered exactly how far He would let Satan go.* He did not, at first, permit him to touch Job's flesh—perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you ever noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health, you can bear losses and crosses, and even bereavements with something like equanimity? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first, and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him, but God, who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, "Thus far and no farther." By degrees, he became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all its sting the moment Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away." That enemy was slain—no, it was buried and this was the funeral oration—"Blessed be the name of the Lord." When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man



in the possession of great worldly wealth to suddenly be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first, and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment. Having already lost all, he might almost say, “I thank God, that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, ‘How I wish I could go out in my fields, and see to my servants,’ for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children—they are all dead and gone; I am thankful that they are—better that, than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this.” He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone, too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared; and possibly, if he had had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord, who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out His servant’s woe.

Did not the Lord also consider *how He would sustain His servant under the trial*? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job’s fire of divine grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He says to Himself, “If Satan shall do much, I will do more; if he takes away much, I will give more; if he tempts the man to curse, I will fill him so full of love to Me that he shall bless Me; I will help him; I will strengthen him—yes, I will uphold him with the right hand of My righteousness.” Christian, take those two thoughts, and put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey—you will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads, and, on the other hand, when He permits it, He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, or give you grace to stand under it.

In the next place, the Lord considered *how to sanctify Job by this trial*. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was “a perfect and an upright man” at first, but there was a little pride about him. We are poor

creatures to criticize such a man as Job—but still, I think there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness. His friends brought it out. Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things, that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks; there was a little too much self-justification. He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little—he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow—but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it; and though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed, and Job might have sinned. But Satan was in such a hurry, that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up, and so was the Lord's tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently, a safer and blessed state of mind. Moreover, observe how Satan was a lackey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being *enabled to earn a greater reward*. All his prosperity is not enough; God loves Job so much that He intends to give him twice as much property; He intends to give him his children again; He means to make him a more famous man than ever; a man whose name shall ring down the ages; a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighborhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trumpet of fame through which Job's name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge, and works away with all his might to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! He is piling up a pedestal on which God will set His servant Job that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude, *Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan*. If you want to make the devil angry, throw the story of Job in his teeth. If you desire to have your own confidence

sustained, may God the Holy Spirit head you into the patience of Job. Oh, how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the Patriarch of Uz! O arch-fiend, how are you taken in your own net! You have thrown a stone which has fallen on your own head; you made a pit for Job, and have fallen into it yourself; you are taken in your own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad. Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death—we will in all things, through Jesus Christ's blood, be conquerors, and by the power of His Spirit we shall overcome at the last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted Him be led to begin this very morning, and God shall have all the praise in us all, forevermore. Amen.

**624 PRESENT PRIVILEGE AND FUTURE  
FAVOR – DEUT. 33:27**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Wednesday Evening, March 29th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At Upton Chapel**

**“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them.” — Deuteronomy 33:27**

THERE IS a great satisfaction in having such a text as this, for even if the *preacher* should not be able to say anything to edification, yet the text itself is rich food for the saints, and may fully satisfy their hunger. Let but a child of God really digest such a royal dainty as this, and he shall be as well fed as was Elijah when, waking up, found food under the juniper tree, in the strength of which he might go for 40 days. This one verse may, by the Holy Spirit, be made sufficiently nourishing to sustain a believer from that place where he now is, to the gates of glory. “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

It is fabled that the swan sings but once, and that just before it dies; so Moses, who had been all his life a prophet, now closes his career a poet, and dies singing. He praises God, setting Him above all gods, and defying all men to find one like unto Him, “Who is like unto the God of Jeshurun?” Not satisfied with this, he also exalts in the highest degree all the people who have God to be their portion. “Happy are you, O

Israel, who is like unto you?” I may say that my text is a combination of the two—he is here extolling God, the everlasting and eternal God who is our refuge—and he is here admiring the privilege of believers who have such a God to rest upon. While we are speaking, therefore, this evening, if you are not profited by our words, yet your hearts may be blessed if you praise God for His great goodness towards you, and may you also feel melted with holy joy at the blessed privileges which belong to you as the people of God, in having such a God who is so good to you.

The text naturally divides itself into two parts—*the present* and *the future*; in the present, we have the eternal God to be our refuge; in the future it is written that He shall thrust out the enemy from before us, and shall say, “Destroy them.”

I. Beginning, then, with the first part of the text, **THE PRESENT BLESSING** appears to me to give us three distinct thoughts.

*God is our shelter*; “The eternal God is your refuge.” But the word, “refuge,” according to many of the best translators, may be read, “mansion,” or “abiding place,” so here comes a second thought, that *God is our abode*. Then the next sentence gives us the third thought, “And underneath are the everlasting arms,” so that *God is our support*, as well as our shelter and our abode.

1. We will begin our meditation, in the Spirit's power, by considering *God as our shelter*. The children of Israel, while they were in Egypt, and in the wilderness, were a type of God's visible Church on earth. Moses was speaking primarily of them, but secondarily, of all the chosen ones of God in every age. Now, as God was the shelter of His ancient people Israel, so is He the refuge of His saints through all time. And first, He was eminently their shelter when *they were under bondage and the yoke was heavy*. When they had to make bricks without straw, and the taskmasters oppressed them, then the people cried unto the

Lord, and God heard their cry, and sent unto them His servant Moses. So also, there often comes to men a time when they begin to feel the oppression of Satan. I believe that many ungodly men feel the slavery of their position. Even some of those who are never converted have sense enough to feel at times that the service of Satan is a hard one, yielding but little pleasure, and involving awful risks. Some men cannot go long making bricks without straw, without being more or less conscious that they are in the house of bondage; these, who are not God's people, under the pressure of mind consequent upon a partial discovery of their state, turn to some form of pleasure or self-righteousness in order to forget their burden and yoke; but God's elect people, moved by a higher power, are led to cry unto their God. It is one of the first signs of a chosen soul—that it seems to know, as if by heavenly instinct—where its true refuge is. Dear brethren, you remember that although you knew but little of Christ, and in doctrinal matters you were very dark, though you did not understand, perhaps, even your own need, yet there was a something in you that made you pray, and realize that only at the mercy seat could you find your refuge. Before you were a Christian, before you could say—"Christ is mine," your bedside was the witness to many flowing tears when your aching heart poured itself out before God, perhaps in strains like these—"O God, I need *something*; I do not know what it is I need, but I feel a heaviness of spirit; my mind is burdened, and I feel that You only can unburden me. I know that I am a sinner; oh, that You would forgive me! I hardly understand the plan of salvation, but one thing I know—I need to be saved; I would arise and go unto my Father—my heart pants to make Your bosom my refuge." Now, I say that this is one of the first indications that such a soul is one of God's chosen, for it is true,

just as it was of Israel in Egypt, that God is the refuge of His people even when they are under the yoke.

When captivity is led captive, the eternal God becomes *the refuge of His people from their sins*. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt; they were free; albeit they were marching they knew not where, yet their chains were snapped; they were emancipated, and needed not to call any man, “Master.” But look, Pharaoh is angry, and he pursues them—with his horses and his chariots he hastens after them. The enemy said, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” Thus there is a period in the spiritual life, when sin labors to drag back the sinner who has newly escaped from it. Like hosts ready for battle, all the poor sinner’s past iniquities hurry after him, and overtake him in a place where his way is hedged in. The poor fugitive would escape, but he cannot! What, then, must he do? You remember that *then* Moses cried unto the Lord. When nothing else could be found to afford shelter to the poor escaped slaves; when the Red Sea rolled before them, and the mountains shut them in on either side; when an angry foe pursued them, there was one road which was not stopped up, and that was the King’s highway upward to the throne, the way to their God, and therefore, they began at once to travel that road, lifting up their hearts in humble prayer to God, trusting that He would deliver them. You know the story too well for me to need to repeat it here—how the uplifted rod divided the watery deeps, how the people passed through the sea as a horse through the wilderness, and how the Lord brought all the hosts of Egypt into the depths of the sea—that He might utterly destroy them, so that not one of them was left, and those who had seen them one day saw them no more forever.

Beloved, in this sense God is still the refuge of His people. *Our* sins, which pursued us so hotly, have been drowned in the

depths of the Savior's blood. They sank to the bottom like stones, the depths have covered them, there is not one, no, not *one* of them left, and we, standing upon the shore in safety, can shout in triumph over our drowned sins, "Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously, and all our iniquities has He cast into the midst of the sea."

While God is thus the refuge of His people under the yoke, and when sin seeks to overcome them, He is also their refuge *in times of need*. The children of Israel journeyed into the wilderness, but there was nothing for them to feed upon there; the arid sand yielded them neither leeks, nor garlic, nor cucumbers; and no brooks or rivers, like the Nile, were there to quench their thirst; they would have famished if they had been left to depend upon the natural productions of the soil. They came to Marab, where there was a well, but the water was very bitter; at other stations there were no wells whatever, and even bitter water was not to be had. What then? Why, the unfailing refuge of God's people in the wilderness was prayer. Moses, their representative, always betook himself to the Most High, at times falling upon his face in agony, and at other seasons climbing to the top of the hill, and there pleading in solemn communion with God, that He would deliver the people. And you have heard full often how men did eat angels' food in the desert—how Jehovah rained bread from heaven upon His people in the howling wilderness, and how He smote the rock, and waters gushed forth. You have not forgotten how the strong wind blew, and brought them flesh, so that they ate and were satisfied. Israel had no need unsupplied; their garments waxed not old, and though they went through the wilderness, their feet grew not sore. God supplied all their needs. We in our land must go to the baker, the butcher, the clothier, and many others in order to fully equip ourselves. But the men of Israel went to God for everything! We have to store



up our money, and buy this in one place and that in the other—but the eternal God was their refuge and their resort for everything, and in every time of need, they had nothing to do but to lift up their voice to Him.

Now it is just so with us *spiritually*. Faith sees our position today to be just that of the children of Israel then—whatever our needs are, the eternal God is our refuge. God has promised you that your bread shall be given you, and that your water shall be sure. He who gives spirituals will not deny temporals. The mighty Master will never allow you to perish while He has it in His power to succor you. Go to Him with whatever may be the trouble which weighs you down. Do not suppose your case too bad, for nothing is too hard for the Lord! Dream not that He will refuse to undertake temporals as well as spirituals—He cares for you in all things. In everything you are to give *thanks*, and surely in everything by prayer and supplication you may make known your needs unto God. In times when the cruse of oil is ready to fail, and the handful of meal is all but spent, then go to the all-sufficient God, and you shall find that they who trust in Him shall not lack any good thing.

Furthermore, our God is the refuge of His saints *when their enemies rage*. When the host was passing through the wilderness, they were suddenly attacked by the Amalekites. Unprovoked, these marauders of the desert set upon them, and destroyed the tail end of them, and what did Israel do? The people did not ask to have a strong body of horsemen, hired out of the land of Egypt for their refuge, or even if they did wish it, he who was their wiser self, Moses, looked to another arm than that of man, for he cried unto God! How glorious is that picture of Moses, with uplifted hands, upon the top of the hill giving victory to Joshua in the plains below. Those uplifted arms were worth 10,000 men to the hosts of Israel; no, twice 10,000 had not so easily gotten a victory as did those two extended arms

which brought down omnipotence itself from heaven! This was Israel's master-weapon of war—their confidence in God. Joshua shall go forth with men of war, but the Lord, Jehovah-Nissi, is the banner of the fight, and the giver of the victory! Thus, dear friends, the eternal God is *our* refuge. When our foes rage we need not fear their fury. Let us not seek to be without enemies, but let us take our case and spread it before God. We cannot be in such a position, that the weapons of our foes can hurt us, while the promise stands good—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment You shall condemn." Though earth and hell should unite in malice, the eternal God is our castle and stronghold, securing to us an everlasting refuge.

To close our remarks upon this point—*when their falls into sin had cursed the people of God*, and provoked the Most High so that He sent fiery serpents among them, *even then the eternal God was their refuge*. When we are conscious that sin has brought us into any mischief or sorrow, we are apt to feel—"I must not go to God with this, because it is clearly the natural and inevitable result of my sin—it is a rod of my own making." Yes, but we may go even with that, for if the Lord should send the fiery serpents, still, you must fly into the arms of that very God who has sent the serpents to bite you—for it is He, and He alone, who can lift up the bronze serpent before your tearful eyes, and give you life through looking at it! We make a mistake when we imagine that we may not go to God as sinners; we may feel unworthy to go, but we must not think that we shall be unwelcome. I do not go to my heavenly Father in times of need because I feel there are excellences in me, which will qualify me for receiving His help, but I go, because I feel unfit to be blessed, and am therefore, anxious for the blessing; I go because I feel unworthy of deliverance, and am the more desirous that I may get deliverance from the God of grace.

The eternal God, then, is our refuge in a thousand ways. I have only given you a few hints on this part of the subject, but we will sum them up, and then you can enlarge on them at your leisure. Under the yoke, before sin is forgiven, if you are a child of God, the eternal God is your refuge; when you have escaped from sin, and the past haunts you, still the eternal God is your refuge; when, in the wilderness, your needs press you down, whether they are temporal or spiritual, *then* the eternal God is your refuge; and when your enemies attack you, or your own guilt has brought you into such a position that God Himself chastises you sharply, still, even then it holds good and true that, the eternal God is your refuge if you believe in Him.

2. Now take the second thought with brevity. The eternal God is *our mansion, our dwelling, our abiding place*. The children of Israel had no other, and therefore if God were not their dwelling place, they were houseless. Pilgrims of the weary foot, they found no city to dwell in. At eventide they pitched their tents, but they struck them again in the morning; the trumpet sounded and they were up and away; if they were in a comfortable valley for one day, yet that relentless trumpet bade them resume their wearisome march through the wilderness in the morning; and, perhaps, they thought they lingered the longest where an encampment was least desirable. Nevertheless, they always had a dwelling place in their God. If I might use such a description without seeming to be fanciful, I would say that the great cloudy canopy which covered them all day long from the heat of the sun was their roof—and that the blazing pillar which protected them by night was their family fireside. God Himself dwelt in the very midst of them in the bright shining light, the Shekinah, within the Holy Place, and up from the very spot there rose the great pillar which was cloud by day and fire by night, and so, within the compass of God's protecting presence they found a perpetual abode. So Moses

sings, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Wherever they were, if they were but under the shadow of that cloud, they were quite at home, and whenever they got within the radius of the bright pillar of fire, they felt that they were not away from the family circle. Now I hope that many of us can say that the eternal God is our dwelling place—

“Home, home, Sweet home,  
There’s no place like home,”

says the song, and certainly, if God is our home, the song has a depth of sweetness in it. *At home one feels safe.* An Englishman’s house is his castle; who shall intrude upon him there? When the bolt is drawn, when the curtains are drawn, when the family gathers round the fireside, then we have shut the world, and all our enemies’ babbling tongues out, and we dwell in quiet. So when we get to our God, not bolts of brass nor gates of iron could guard God’s people as well as that wall of fire, which Jehovah is to all His chosen. When we draw near to God in sweet communion, we feel as if the devil himself were dumb—

“Then, let the earth’s old pillars shake,  
And all the wheels of nature break,  
Our steadfast souls shall fear no more,  
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”

At home, too, *we take our rest.* Out in the world, in the workshop, we toil until the sweat streams from our face; in the pulpit, in the midst of our congregations, our mind is so active and on the alert, that the brain is often wearied, but at home we cast ourselves down upon the couch, and feel that now the day’s work is over, and that the happy evening of rest has come.

When I get to my God, no servile works have I to do—no hewing of wood and drawing of water, like a Gibeonite, in God's house; but here I am, His servant, happy in His service, and finding sweet rest in what I do for Him. "We, who have believed, do enter into rest," and there is a peace which, "passes all understanding, which keeps our heart and mind, through Christ Jesus."

At home *we let our hearts loose*. We cast aside all dignity there—we are no longer on our guard like men in armor; we are not afraid that our children will misunderstand us, or that our dear ones will misconstrue our words and sentiments; we feel at ease. So is it when we are with our God. I dare tell Him what I dare not tell anyone else; there is no secret of my heart which I would not pour into His ear; there is no wish that might be deemed foolish or ambitious by others, which I would not communicate to Him; for surely, if "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him," the secrets of them who fear Him ought to be, and must be with their Lord.

It is at home, if anywhere, that a man *is thoroughly happy and delighted*. He takes his soul's best solace there; his eyes sparkle most at his own fireside; whatever the man may be abroad, with all his cares and his troubles, he can't wait to get home, as going to the place of his delight. So I trust it is with us and our God. We go out, like Noah's dove; with weary wings we fly over the watery waste, ready to drop; but we come back again, like that same dove, into Noah's hand, and there we find our resting place forever.

*It is for home that a man works and labors*. I am sure when I see the workers filling the streets, just when work is over, that the most of them have a home to go to, for the sake of which they toil. What makes that man work so hard? Why, there are three little ones at home who must be fed! How is it that he is content to go through so much toil, but there is a wife at home dear to

his soul, and for her and the babies he fights the battle of life bravely. Be it ever so homely; be it up ever so many pairs of stairs, yet the thought of that little room, and of the dear ones there at home, gives strength to the man to bear his burden and helps his fingers to fly the quicker over his work. In this sense, too, I think we can say that our gracious God is our home, our mansion. The love of God strengthens us. We do but think of Him in the person of His dear Son, and a glimpse of the suffering face of the Redeemer compels us to labor. We feel that we must work, for we have brethren yet to be saved; we have uncalled ones yet to be brought in; we have the head of Christ to crown—we have the Father's heart to make glad, by bringing home to Him His wayward and wandering sons.

We will pause here, and see if we can say, "Yes, 'tis true, Lord; You are, as the eternal God, our mansion and dwelling place." I pray, dear friends, do not say this in words unless you know in truth that the eternal God is your dwelling place.

3. We must be very brief on the third part of this present privilege—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." This means that God is *our support* and our support just when we begin to sink. We need support when we are sinking, and by the arms being "underneath," it seems that this support is given just when we are going down. At certain seasons the Christian *sinks very low in humiliation*. He has a deep sense of his own sin; he is humbled before God till he scarcely knows how to lift up his face and pray, because he appears, in his own sight, so abject, so mean, so base, and so worthless. Well, child of God, remember that when you are at your worst, yet "underneath you are the everlasting arms," Christ's atonement dives deeper than your sin. Sin may sink you ever so low, but the great atonement is still under all! I will give you a text which proves it. "He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." You may have gone very low, but you can never

have gone so low, as “the uttermost.” Here is another. “All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.” You have plunged into nearly all sorts of sin, but you have not gone into, “all manner of sin.” Or if you have, it may be forgiven, so that this promise goes underneath you. The love of God, the power of the blood, and the prevalence of the intercession are deeper down than sin, with all its hell-born vileness, can ever sink the sinner, while breath is in his nostrils

Again, the Christian sometimes sinks very deeply in *sore trials from without*. He loses his property; his children die; his wife is carried to the grave—every earthly prop is cut away. What then? He goes down, down, down—yet still underneath him are the everlasting arms! You cannot sink so deep in distress and affliction, but what the covenant grace of an ever-faithful God will be still lower than you are—even when at your very lowest. Look at your Savior—you are never as low as He was. Perhaps you cannot pay your rent, and you are to be turned out of that little room; this is falling low indeed, but what did your Savior say—“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay My head.” I have supposed you to be in a very sad case, but, you see, underneath you there are the sufferings of Christ. Perhaps your friends have forsaken you; yes, but hear Him—“He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” He is deeper in the mire than you. You are very, very, *very* poor, but see, there *He* hangs upon the cross—stripped naked, without a rag to cover Him; deserted by all. You have gone very far, but not as far as that. Jesus represents the great goodness of God in its communion with your need, and in Him your God puts underneath you His everlasting arms.

Possibly you are sinking very deep down, *under trouble from within*. You have felt such vexations of spirit as you never thought you could have known; you have waged such a conflict

as you never dreamed of; the fountains of the great deep have been broken up, and, as a deluge, sin threatens to cover your spirit, and drown all the life in your heart. Beloved, you cannot, even there, be brought as low as Christ was, for what did He say—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” God is still with you to be your succor, and if you have lost the light of your Father’s countenance, yet you have not lost it to so great an extent as your Savior did; you have not yet sweat “great drops of blood,” you have not yet prayed with strong crying and tears, and found that the cup could not be removed altogether. You have not yet descended into the depths, as your Savior did; and so we will take it for granted that underneath you, wherever you may be, there are the everlasting arms. I think I see the devil trying to drown a believer, but underneath are the everlasting arms. Satan says, “I will have him yet,” and down he dives lower still—but the everlasting arms are even there. Why, look what he did with Jonah! He got him into the whale’s belly, but he was not content with that. The whale, of course, was near the surface when it first sucked Jonah in, but it goes down, perhaps half a mile; it must go yet deeper, and so it stirs up the deep in its pain, for it has an indigestible morsel within, and it does not know what to do with it! It plunges down, down, *DOWN*, till Jonah says he went to the bottoms of the mountains, and the weeds were wrapped about his head, and the earth with her bars was about him forever—yet even then, “underneath were the everlasting arms,” and therefore the whale comes up, and Jonah stands upon the dry land once more! So shall it be with you, beloved, for in your worst trials and times of difficulty, underneath you are the everlasting arms!

And this, also, I may give you *by way of comfort, in any weary labors in which you may be engaged*. There are some of God’s servants who feel as if they would willingly die; for to serve God, though very pleasant, is at times very difficult work; and



when one is involved in God's service, and is ready to drop, one will cry out, "Oh, when shall the day of rest come?" Courage, courage, you fainting soldier! Underneath are the everlasting arms—you shall have strength equal to your day! Your shoes shall be iron and brass! You shall end your journey well, and you shall fight the fight till the victory comes!

At last, *when death comes*, the promise shall still hold good. We shall stand in the midst of Jordan and, like poor *Christian*, it is possible that we may begin to sink; but may we have some *Hopeful* with us then, to say, as *Hopeful* did to *Christian*, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, it is good"—for underneath us there will be the everlasting arms. You may be full of pain and anguish, and the spirit may sink into a spiritual death even before the natural death comes on; you may feel dying to be dreadful work, but still, if the worst should come to worst, you shall yet, in the hour of extremity, win the victory! You shall triumph over death, and enter into the presence of God, and bless His name because, "underneath you are the everlasting arms."

I can scarcely venture on the second part of my subject tonight at all, for we have not done with the first point. I wish you to notice those two phrases which are the pith of the text. "The *eternal God*." "Everlasting arms." "The *eternal God*." Here is *antiquity*. The God who was before all worlds is forever my God. Oh, how I love that word, "eternal"! But, brethren, there are some people who do not believe in an *eternal God*. At any rate, they do not believe in Him as being theirs eternally. They do not believe that they belonged to Christ before they were born; they have a notion that they only had God to be theirs when they believed on Him for the first time. They do not believe in covenant settlements, and eternal decrees, and the ancient purposes of the Most High; but let me say that for comfort, there is no thought more full of sweetness, than that of an

eternal God engaged in Christ Jesus to His people; to love, and bless, and save them *all*! One who has made them the distinguished objects of His discriminating regard from all eternity. It is the *ETERNAL* God. And then there are the “*everlasting arms*”—arms that will never drop, arms that will never grow weary, arms that will never lose their strength. They put the two words “eternal” and “everlasting” together, and they remind us of another sweet word— *immutability*. An everlasting God who faints not, neither is weary, who changes not, and turns not from His promise. Such is the God we delight to adore and to use as our eternal shelter, our dwelling place and our support.

**II.** The second part of the subject, **AS TO THE FUTURE**, I cannot dwell upon for lack of time, but only give you an outline of what one might have said upon it, if there had been opportunity.

He, who has been our God in the past, will certainly be our God in the future! And in the future we have two things to comfort us—*divine work*, and we have a *divine word*.

Here is a *divine work*. He will thrust out our enemies before us. Whatever your difficulties may be, whatever your sins may be against which you have to contend, remember, Jehovah leads the van, and crushes your foes before you come to them. You have to fight, Christian, with vanquished enemies, and it is an easy thing, when you have to overcome a dragon that has already had his head broken, by your risen Lord. Therefore Dr. Watts makes us sing for our comfort—

“Hell and your sins resist your course,  
But hell and sin are vanquished foes!  
Your Savior nailed them to the cross,  
And sung the triumph when He rose.”

Before you get to your difficulties, your God will have removed them. The stone was laid at the mouth of the sepulcher, and the women said, “Who shall roll away the stone?” But when they arrived at the spot, they found that the stone had been rolled away by an angel long before. March on, Christian—the Jordan may be very deep—but as soon as the feet of God’s priests touch the border of the river it shall be dried up. You shall have before you 10,000 things which may appall you, but if you will but go on in the strength of faith, they shall prove to be but the shadows which disappear when the sun rises. There is divine work always going on before God’s people; His shield always goes in front; His sword always cuts and clears the way, and we have but to follow where He leads. When the children of Israel passed over Jordan, the priests who bore the ark first dipped their feet in the stream, and it parted before the servants of the Lord because God was between the cherubim. So in every crossing which lies in the path to the city of our God, that better city, Jerusalem the Golden, we see the footprints of one who is our Priest—touched with a sense of our infirmities and griefs because He has endured the same before us; Who has planted His feet in the darkest depths, and made a path through the mightiest waters so that we need not fear—but may boldly plunge in—assured that we only follow Him whose presence will always enable us to say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” We follow the Captain of our salvation who says, “Come on, follow Me.” He goes before. Every dart that wounds you passes by Him. Yes, He has felt the first smart of each poisoned arrow in the devil’s quiver, and the venomous power has been washed away in His blood. There is not a weapon in hell’s armory whose edge has not been turned on the armor of our great Champion; the

keenness of every blade is gone since it was buried in His wounds. When Jacob wrestled with the Nameless One till the break of day, he came out of the contest with one sinew withered so that he limped to his grave; and thus each of our foes has received a touch from the finger of Him, “who comes up from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength.” And that touch has crippled the power of our enemies; they are spoiled and robbed of much of their satanic might, because they have been beneath the heel of Him who has trod down all our foes beneath His feet.

Still, we are not to be idle, for we have next *a divine word*. He shall thrust out our enemies, but He will also say, “*Destroy them.*” We have to take God’s Word, and to be obedient to it in the future. Whatever sins we have, there is only one thing to be done with them, and that is to “destroy them.” A man has a number of faults, and he says, “Well, sir, there is my drunkenness, and my swearing, and so on; I am quite agreeable to what you say, I will destroy *them*. I will hang them on a gallows as high as that on which Haman would have hanged Mordecai; but, sir, I have little a trick in my trade—I should not like to tell everybody of *it*—it is a very profitable one, and I do not think it is so very bad, for nearly everybody else in the trade does it. Do you not think the best way would be to practice it, and give part of the money I get by it to God’s cause? I will be very careful, and do it only when compelled.” My dear friend, I have only one thing to say to you about your sin, and that is, “*Destroy it!*” Do not try to make it better, to dress it up, swear it in, and make a soldier of it for Christ—no—destroy it; this is your work. If your eye offends you, “pluck it out.” “Oh,” says another, “but I have a very bad temper; I sometimes fly into a passion, I think I must try to get over it by *degrees*, but still I can make a great many excuses for myself, and am I not quite right in doing so?” My dear sir, I can only say one thing, and that is,

*“Destroy it,”* for the only proper treatment of sin is to cut it off and cast it from you. Do not pamper it or excuse it, but destroy it! Smite it to the heart if you can, and never be satisfied till you have utterly destroyed it. Look at Saul. He has been against the Amalekites, and he brings home a very beautiful flock of sheep and bullocks, and so on. He is told to destroy them all, but he brings them home and Agag with them. Why did he not kill Agag? Well, he was such a gentleman, such a thorough gentleman, that he did not want to kill him; it was a public duty to sweep the commonplace Amalekites out of the way, they were such rascals; but this Agag, why, he walked so delicately, he had such a nice way with him, he was so winning, he had such an enchanting face, had the manners and air, in fact, of an Israelite—it would be a pity, a great pity to kill him!

So Saul brought home the best of the sheep, and the beasts, and the cattle, and Agag with them. But Samuel comes in, and is in no sweet mood when he hears the bleating of the sheep. He demands of Saul—“Have you done as God commanded you?” “Yes I have,” said Saul. “Then what mean the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle that I hear?” “Oh,” said Saul, “I did not slay them *all*. I thought I had better spare some of the best of them as an offering unto God, so I kept them alive, and I have also kept Agag.” What came of it? Did the prophet spare the Amalekite? No, truly! Samuel first told Saul that God had put him away from being king, and then he said, “Bring Agag,” and Agag came to him—you can imagine how he would come—and Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” There he stood, and I think I see Samuel, getting gray then, very gray and not very fit for such service, but he looked for the nearest sword that he could get, and though it is not a prophet’s work to kill, yet as soon as he could grasp a sword, he hewed Agag in pieces! He was not content to cut his head off, but hewed him in pieces, as a man would chop a block

of wood—to show the anger and detestation which God had towards the most princely sins.

Now, Christian, your business with sin is in the Spirit's power to serve it as Samuel did Agag—to hew it in pieces, and show the utmost hatred towards it. So far from making excuses for it, seek to devise ways by which you may mortify it and put it to death.

When the Prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and, said he, “Let not one escape.” And he took them all down to the brook Kishon and slew them there. So must it be with our sins—each one must die—let not one escape! Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it is a darling sin as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was on His Son; even so, with stern unflinching purpose, condemn to death that sin which may have been the darling of your heart. Spare it not, because it may make sport or be of use in any way. Remember Samson, how he gathered strength as his locks grew once more, and how he avenged himself upon his foes. Beware lest your sins which are only for a while repressed, and not totally destroyed, should rise up again, and with new-found might should hurl you to the ground, and bury you in the wreck of your noblest hopes and deeds. You will probably ask how you will be able to accomplish this work. Why, take the promise we have been talking about—“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness! There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Get into God's arms, and you will see how to hit at sin, and will gather strength to give the final

blow which shall lay the monster in the dust. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half as well as he did when his eye of faith rested on God, and he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes.

The fine gold of the Christian is often becoming dim, and the spots will appear upon the surface showing that we dwell among the sons of earth, in a world which lies in the wicked one. We need some sacred fire which shall consume away the dross, and give us back the brightness we have lost. Go to God, He is a consuming fire, not to your spirit, but to your sins. You may so plead the work of Christ and the covenant of grace as to make the very nature of God, which would condemn you out of Christ, to cleanse you, being in Christ Jesus. You will be sanctified by the God who would have destroyed you, had you not fled for refuge to the hope set before you. You have strength to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace; you have strength to drive out your own iniquities; you have strength to win battles for your Master, because in Christ Jesus, He has promised to be with you even unto the end. May the past experience stimulate you to future exertion, and let the goodness of God excite you to a sacred jealousy and to a holy revenge against those sins which are hateful in His sight.

May God bless you, brethren, for Christ's sake.

## 625 JESUS APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALENE – MARK 16:9

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 16th, 1865,  
by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week,  
He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had  
cast seven devils.” — Mark 16:9

THE DOCTRINE of a risen Savior is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the cornerstone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the keystone of the arch of our salvation. It would take us many a discourse to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source—the resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but to *know* that He has risen, and to have fellowship with Him as such—communing with the risen Savior by possessing a risen life—seeing Him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is lovelier than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Savior lovelier than the doctrine itself. I would have you *believe* that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you rest not content even there. Brethren in Christ, I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith, and though you may not



touch Him, yet may you be privileged to converse with Him, and to know that He is risen, you yourselves being risen in Him to newness of life. To know a crucified Savior as having crucified all my sins, is a rich kind of knowledge; and to know a risen Savior as having justified me, and to realize that He has bestowed upon me new life, given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life, this is a high style of experience—short of it, none of us ought to be satisfied to rest. In fact, I would have you this morning, like the blessed Magdalene, among those to whom Jesus Christ should manifest Himself after His resurrection, as He does not unto the world.

Let us come at once to the consideration of this first appearance of the Savior, after He had left the tomb. He appears to Mary Magdalene. There must have been some reason for the choice. We shall notice first of all, *who she was*; then, *how she sought*; and, thirdly, *how she found*.

I. First we shall have to take into consideration this morning **WHO SHE WAS**.

Jesus “appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” Why? One answer might be *because He chose to do so*. For in His sovereignty, He may reveal Himself to whomever He wills, and He may withhold Himself from whomever He shall please. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” may be a very grating truth to human ears, but it is a truth of God for all that, and he who does not acknowledge it scarcely puts God into His true place as sitting upon the throne and doing as He wills with His own. I should be content to know that He appeared to Mary Magdalene first and not to ask another question if I thought it unwise to ask it, for, “He is the Lord, and let Him do what seems good to Him.” And if He will reveal Himself first to her, let it be so; here I see His grace and say, let His name be magnified in the sovereignty of His love.

But we may go a little further into the matter, I think, and perhaps find some reasons. He revealed Himself first to Mary Magdalene, a *woman*. Was it not most meet that a woman should first see the risen Savior? *She* was first in the transgression—let her be first in the justification. In yon garden, she was first to work our woe—let her, in that other garden, be the first to see Him who works our happiness. She takes the apple of that bitter tree which brings us all our sorrow; let her be the first to see that mighty Gardener who has planted a tree which brings forth fruit unto everlasting life! A woman let it be, for woman was last at the cross and last at the sepulcher—let her be earliest to return. The *Marys* embalmed the Savior, and put Him into the tomb—let one of their company be selected to be the first to see Him. Sisters in Christ Jesus, there is a curse which falls more heavily on you than on others—a curse which is peculiar to you; but here you have reason to rejoice since, “Unto you a child is born, unto you a son is given.” It is by that child-bearing which brings you sorrow, that we have been delivered, even through the birth of Him, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us, whom you are privileged first to see because He is peculiarly yours. “The seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent’s head.”

The text seems to indicate that the particular reason why He appeared to this woman first was, *because out of her He had cast seven devils*. Perhaps no person mentioned in the Scripture has been more singularly slandered than Mary Magdalene. It has been supposed that she was a harlot, and her name has been appended to societies which have the merciful objective of endeavoring to reclaim the fallen. In that sense let me say, Magdalene never was a “Magdalen.” She was not an unchaste woman. I think I can show you that it is quite impossible that she could have been. She was a woman of substance, and ministered to Christ’s necessities; she was possessed of wealth

and property, and spent what she had upon the Savior, and was not likely, therefore, to have been one who earned her living by the pitiful trade of her sin. Moreover, she had seven devils and that, of itself, rendered her utterly incapable, one would think, of having been guilty of the sins of the flesh. A woman, a demoniac, mad with seven devils! Who would dream that a poor creature under so dreadful a torture as this could have been a harlot? The thing is clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind. But mark you, I believe if Magdalene were here herself, she would not regret that her pure name has been appended to these poor fallen ones. Here she has communion with her Lord and Master, who was “numbered with the transgressors,” and who gave Himself and all that He had in order that He might lift poor sinners from the degradation into which they had fallen. “No,” Magdalene would say, “do not blot my name off from yonder building; do not take it from that rescue society; I, though I have been kept from this iniquity, am well content to be the patron of all those who seek to win sinners from their sin.” Nevertheless, there is this about it—and here is where the mistake first arose—the possession of a devil is *typical*, in the Word of God, of sin. When we want to translate the miracle into spiritual meaning, we are always compelled to use the indwelling of a devil to be the metaphor—the picture of the indwelling of sin. Now, as Mary Magdalene had seven devils, though she was not, therefore, any the greater sinner, for she could not help the devils being there, yet she was thereby the more polluted; she was sevenfold polluted, and she becomes most rightly the type of the great sinner, the representative, in fact, of the very class of sinners to whom her name has been given. She was not literally such a sinner, but she was typically so, for in her there were seven devils. Typically, she stands at the head of those who are the greatest of all sinners against the

law, and goodness, and grace of God, but she was not so except as a type.

Now, I think you see some reason why she should be selected as the first one to be seen by Christ, because *she had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power*. In her, He had won a special and signal victory over the hosts of hell—a perfect number of those evil spirits had been entrenched within her, and Christ's victorious arm had driven them all out. She would always be regarded as a most illustrious specimen of what the great Savior can achieve. In this sense, I say, she was fitted to be the first that Jesus Christ should look upon and speak to, because out of all His disciples who were daily with Him, I know not of one who had experienced such a cure as that which had fallen to her lot. Let us learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should never make us think that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. If Magdalene were not a harlot, yet I say she stands as the type of those who are possessors of seven sins, and deadly and damnable sins, too; and inasmuch as this woman is taken into the most intimate communion with Christ, and has the priority even above Peter, and James, and John, there is no reason, poor fallen sinner, why *you* should not have as rich a feast at the banquet of divine mercy as the very best, and most chaste, the most upright, pure and clean. If you come to Christ, if the seven devils are cast out of you, all these things shall never be mentioned against you; but you shall stand on a par with those who were preserved by providence and restraining grace from going into gross sins. When the prodigal came back, he was not told that he might eat his father's bread, but it must be in the kitchen; he was not told that he might sit at the table, but it must be at the far end, below the salt. No, he sits at the table as the most honored guest, and his father feasts with him as if he had never gone astray! So is it forevermore

with my God, to the chief of sinners. You shall not be permitted to eat the crumbs that fall from the table, but the daintiest food shall be yours, yes, and if you wish it, and will press forward and seek it, you shall have Benjamin's mess—you shall have more than others! Oh, though you have been black and vile, He can make you so white and fair that He will not blush to treat you as the man in the parable did his little ewe lamb. You shall drink of His cup and sleep in His bosom, and be very, very dear to Him, sinner though you have been. This seems to be upon the very surface of the text, that Mary Magdalene was selected to be the first to see the Savior because she was a woman—a woman out of whom seven devils had been cast—a type of a great sinner.

Again, she was a woman *in whom mighty grace had proved its power*. It is a well-known fact that devils never went out of men willingly in the Savior's day. They had always to be cast out. You find them foaming at the mouth as soon as Christ is seen, and when He says, "I command you to come out of him," the devil tears the man, rolls him in the dust, and subjects him to unusual spasms of pain and agony, before he will depart. Thus, seven devils had been driven out of Mary—forced out of her. Mary was no free-willer; her deliverance was achieved by irresistible, eternal, sovereign grace. And surely those are privileged to see most of Christ who *know* that their salvation is not of man, neither by man, but by the will and power of the gracious God alone. My brethren, there may be some of you who think that the devils went out of you; I know they did not go out of *me*. They had to be driven out with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm. There may be some who boast of the freeness of their wills, who think that they can come to Christ of themselves—but Mary did not—for no demoniacs ever sought to find Christ. They rather shunned the presence of the Savior, and cried, "What have we to do with You? Are You

come to torment us before the time?” We rather hated divine grace and despised Christ; offers of mercy were lost upon us; proclamations of pardon, though honestly given, we trampled underfoot; it was only when the mighty Jesus, dressed in robes of love, came forth in the greatness of His strength, that we were compelled to yield, and our captivity was led captive by His might! I think that Mary Magdalene was thus selected because she was a choice instance of irresistible grace.

As soon as the devils were cast out of Mary, she appears to have left whatever her earthly position may have been, and to have become *a constant attendant on the Savior*. If you will kindly turn to the 8th chapter of Luke, you will see that our Lord was attended not only by men, but by women. “It came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance.” It appears, then, that Magdalene was one who abode with Christ Jesus, His perpetual and constant companion. Some heard Him occasionally; she heard Him always. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, entertained Him with a feast now and then—she was *always* giving Him of her substance. There were many like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who were on Christ’s side, but did not take up Christ’s cross—*she* did. In all His afflictions, she was afflicted; when He was “despised and rejected of men,” so was she. She was with Him, bearing His cross, and suffering His reproach. I like the thought of her being with the Savior. How much she must have seen! She saw the most of His miracles. How much she must have heard! She heard, with her own ears, His choice words; yes, and in the

secret conclave where He opened up His parable to His favored disciples, Mary was privileged to be there with a few other honorable women. I suppose her to have been a woman of ripe years, as probably most of the others were—a matron. She was neglecting no household duties; it is clear she never had any—a woman with seven devils could not have had domestic duties.

One would think her friends must have been exceedingly glad to have her under the teaching of our Lord; and as long as they knew that she was in health with the Savior, they probably thought her to be in the place most fitting for her, as mad people are supposed to be most fitly attended when they are accompanied by their keeper or their physician. Having been a demoniac, she was happily freed from all household ties and bonds; and now, what if I say that Christ was her Father, her Brother, her Husband, her Friend, her children, her everything? He was her family, and there was she, daily with Him. We read that when Christ preached a certain truth, “Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” Not so the Magdalene. Let Him preach whatever He might, the woman of Magdala still hung upon His lips. To her, every word was honey, every syllable was a pearl. She treasured all, she fed upon all—she *abided* with Jesus. O dear friends, I wish *we* could get into this position, when our calling should be to serve Christ, and when our place should be always *with* Christ. I do not wonder that Christ appeared first to her when I recollect that Christ had so long been her first, her chief delight. She had nothing in the world but Christ. It strikes me that very likely her being a demoniac had so separated her from all human sympathy, that there were none who loved her, none who cared for her, except the disciples and the society she had found through being a follower of Christ. And Jesus, pitying her,

would not send her away as He did the most of those whom He cured.

One thing we must not pass over—*she spent her substance in relieving His needs*. The bag was not often full, while Judas had the keeping of it; and while there were so many poor, and Christ had such a tender heart, I will be bound to say that no surplus was ever allowed to mold there; but this woman, and the other Marys took care that it should never be quite empty, and that there should be something for the Savior when He needed it. She was not the woman, who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment over Christ's head, but her whole life long, her constant income was her alabaster box, and she spent what she had in ministering to the needs of her Lord. Brethren, if we would see much of Christ, let us *serve* Him. Depend upon it, you who live unto yourselves—who save your wealth when you ought to give it—you are not indulged with that fellowship with Jesus which others have, who have consecrated themselves and their substance wholly to the Lord. I am sure that by not giving, you miss infinite pleasure. I speak not now concerning your safety—I believe you are saved through faith in Christ Jesus—but if you do not devote yourselves and all that you have to the Master's cause, you never will be admitted to those choicer joys, to those more intimate fellowships which belong to those who live close to their Savior in consecration. Find me the happiest Christians, and I am sure they are those who are most attached to their Lord. Tell me who they are who sit most often under the banner of His love, and drink the deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. Perhaps for this reason, Mary was privileged by the grace of God to be the first to see the risen Savior.

**II.** The second inquiry was, **HOW SHE SOUGHT.**



If any of us would have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, how are we to obtain it? We will use her as our guide.

And first Mary sought the Savior *very early* in the morning, by which we learn when we must, many times, begin to seek our Lord. If you can wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with Him by-and-by, you will never have fellowship at all—for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungering and a thirsting heart. If a man is hungry, you cannot say to him, “Be patient; wait!” “My hunger craves,” he says, “give me food; I shall die if I am not fed.” “But you must not be impatient; you must curb your appetite. Wait, be still.” But the poor man replies, “I cannot! My hunger is so sharp; oh, give me bread or I famish! I will die!” You may reason with him, but there is no reasoning with a hungry stomach; and when a man’s soul begins to hunger and thirst after Christ, it is not, “Tomorrow I will see Him,” but, “Now! Now! Now!” Today, which God calls, “the *accepted* time,” the Christian thinks to be the most *acceptable* time. I would have fellowship with Jesus *now*; while standing on this platform, my eyes desire to see Him; my head longs to place itself upon His bosom; my soul would cry with the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” If then, you want Jesus to reveal Himself to you, seek Him *now*, where you are. This pew may be as good as the garden; your own little quiet room, when the service is over, will be quite as near to the Savior as was the sepulcher—only seek Him at once, and allow no delays. Come, Jesus come, for the night is far spent! Arise, great Sun of Righteousness, and chase my gloom away!

She sought Him also, as you will observe, with *very great boldness*. It is said she stood at the sepulcher. The disciples had fled. Read the 8th verse, “They went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to anyone, for they were afraid.” But Mary, we

are told in John's account, "stood" at the sepulcher. "They may run who will," she said, "nothing can frighten me when I seek the Lord." There go the women, Mary and Susanna, the wife of Chuza; there they go, all frightened. There is Peter, the bold Peter; he takes to his heels; and even John, the loving John, follows after him; but Mary stands still. "No," she says, "let the worst come that can, nothing can be worse than losing my Master—if death itself should drag me away, it can only take me into the sepulcher where my Savior went, and perhaps I might find Him there; and if so, death were welcome!" Consider how many fears this timid woman must have had. It is not always safe to go abroad early in the morning. Certainly it was not in the city of Jerusalem, when the city was crowded, for a feeble woman to rise early in the morning, and go out to the tomb! And yet she was not afraid. Let the shadows of the morning be still on the earth, she heeds them not; the shadows in her own soul are worse to her. You might have supposed she would have fears of the angels. She was not. She had had dealings with devils, and she was not to be frightened by angels. Seven devils at once dwelt in her. She knew too much of the supernatural to be frightened at the fall of a leaf, or any noise that might make her weaker companions turn pale. If then you would have Christ to be with you, beloved, seek Him boldly. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world! Dare its pleasures! Laugh at its threats! Despise its promises! Count that, "The reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Press on where others flee. Be like a lion where others turn their backs and Christ will then show Himself to you.

She stood *at the sepulcher*; she sought Christ *very faithfully*. Some find it hard to stand by a living Savior, but she will stand by a dead one. All the disciples forsook Him and fled when He was only in captivity—but she cleaves to Him when His body is in the sepulcher. Brave woman! You will not only stand by

the Master, but by the Master's sepulcher. True heroine! You love even the couch where His dead form sleeps. I would that we sought Christ after this mode, willing to stand by the very form of sound words which has been delivered to us—standing by the doctrine as well as by the Person—cleaving and clinging to the very least thing that has to do with Christ, and feeling that if He has sanctioned it, it is ours to die for the sepulcher as well as for the Man. Oh, if we sought Christ with such faithfulness, we would not long lack the comfort of His presence!

Still note further that John tells us she, “stood outside the sepulcher *weeping*,” which makes me remark that she sought Jesus very earnestly, for as she stood there, not finding Him, she wept. I do not read that the others did this. They loved the Savior, but they did not love Him as much. At any rate, they had not her sensitiveness and delicacy of soul. She wept. I think I know why she wept. “My Savior is gone,” she said, “I cannot find Him.” Then the thoughts of His sad death came rushing full upon her soul. She thought she saw that dreadful scene over again that had made her heart ache and throb. She fancied she saw Him again dragged through the howling populace, abused and despised with His poor back all covered with gore. She thought she beheld once more that blessed body torn with the nails; she marked again the anguish of the fever which came upon Him as He hung upon the tree. She had been the last to watch Him. She stood and watched Him with the other women, and now she cannot bear the thought of all that He has suffered, and the fear that He has gone, gone, gone forever! She weeps. And the Savior could not bear to see her weep. I think those teardrops were as spells that bound the Savior captive, and made Him come forth and show Himself to her. If you want Christ's presence, you are sure to get it if you weep after it! If you have gone so far that you cannot be happy unless He

comes and says to you, “You are My beloved”—if you cannot be content without a kiss from those dear lips—you will have it! He cannot deny those tears—those are heart-breakers to Him—those drops shall burn their way into His soul! You shall look into the face bedewed with tears, and see the loveliness and beauty of Him who was “despised and rejected of men,” if you stand outside at the sepulcher *weeping*.

Nor have I quite done. Mary sought him *perseveringly*, for as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. She had been in it, and found nothing—what made her look again? Have you not, when you have been seeking for something which you felt you *must* find, pulled out a drawer, and looked through it carefully, turning over everything and yet, being exceedingly anxious, you have gone to it once more? You were certain the object was not there, and yet you were so anxious to find it that you looked again and again; and perhaps you returned six or seven times to the place which you had searched thoroughly at first, for you were so desirous to find it. It was so with her. She thought, “Perhaps my eyes may have been blinded—possibly I may not have looked in the right corner—I will look again.” And so she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher—the tears still flowing from her eyes. This showed her perseverance. Yes, and if we would know Christ, He is not to be found by those who merely call upon Him once. Cry to Him by the hour together, if He comes not to you. If going into your chamber once does not give you a sight of Jesus, go again, go again, go again; for mark me, if you should be kept waiting seven years for an interview with the great King—if you should once be favored to see Him—if He shall stretch out the silver scepter to you, you will think yourself all too well rewarded! A thousand—a million years of seeking would be well repaid by one glance from His eyes, and one look from His face. Therefore, seek perseveringly, patiently, and

anxiously—desiring that the risen Savior would manifest Himself to you.

We have almost finished upon this point, but we must note that she sought the Savior *only*. All her thoughts were concentrated upon *Him*. I think if I had been there, I would have been greatly gratified with a sight of the angels. It strikes me that I should have been observing what the forms of beauty which angelic spirits bear were. But she seems to have taken no note of them at all, she says to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” What cared she for angels? If as many had come as the 70,000 chariots of God, they could not have turned away Mary’s thoughts from *Him*. To the gardener, her speech is all full of her Lord, “Sir, if you have borne Him from here, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Mary’s heart was set on one thing. Like an arrow shot from the bow, she sped right on to the target of her heart’s desire. And, oh, if Christ is your one and only love; if your heart has cast out all rivals, if your spirit seeks Him, and cries out for the Lord—even for the living God—you shall soon come and appear before God.

To close this point, let me say there was *much ignorance* in Mary. How was it that she sought the living among the dead? There was *very little faith* in Mary, for faith would have told her that He had risen again on the third day according to His own words. But, oh, there was much *love*, and Jesus overlooked her lack of knowledge and overlooked her weakness of faith, because of the strength of her love. It seems to me that she loved more than John did, for John says, “Then went in that other disciple, and he saw and believed.” That is right, John; you have most faith. He believes, and then he goes away expecting he should see what he believed. But Mary, though she has far less faith, yet, you will perceive, has so much love that she will not go away from the sepulcher, but just keeps her

place there, watching at the post of His door, not satisfied till she can see Him. What love was this! Brethren, if we would see Jesus, we must love Him much. I would God I loved Him as my heart desires to love Him. I hope you can say—

“Yes, I love You, and adore You.

Oh for grace to love You more!”

Let us wake ourselves up to greater intensity of affection. He loved us before the stars were made; He loved us with His whole heart; He loved us to perfection; He loved us unto death. Oh, my cold heart, why do you not melt? Oh, my adamant heart, why do you not dissolve? For such love as this we ought to give Jesus our warmest affection—blazing like coals of juniper; and if we did, we would not be long without finding Him—for love would find Him and fetch Him to our arms, and we would see Him and rejoice in Him!

**III.** The last point now comes, and that is, **HOW SHE FOUND HIM**. He was present, but she could not see Him. Christian, Christ is present here this morning, though you cannot, perhaps, perceive Him. You have not to cry to the Savior to come from heaven to visit you—“Where two or three are met together in My name,” He says, “There am I in the midst of them.” Jesus is here! In these aisles and pews, in this area, and these galleries—Jesus is here. If you have no communion with Him, believer, it is because unbelief darkens your eyes—or grief, or care, or sin makes you blind.

But Jesus Christ was discovered to Mary *by a word*. I want you to notice that it was not a sermon, it was *one* word. It was not a long discourse, but just one word of two syllables, and that not a word of mystery, but a simple word—a word, however, which had this about it—it came from Jesus’ lips; it was personal and went home to her. This is all *you* need,

beloved, this morning. Fifty thousand words from me would only weary you, but listen to one word from the lips of the Savior, a personal word, waking the recollections of your spirit, proving that He remembers you—and cheerfully, on the strength of that word, your soul may stay on earth and finish her threescore years and ten. That one word was her own name—“Mary.” It was spoken just as she had heard it in the days gone by; and, oh, if He would speak to me as He has spoken at the hill Mizar; if He would say of Himself as He has done in days never to be forgotten, “I am your salvation,” we would not want any more, one word would be enough. Oh, beloved, keep on seeking Christ, and you will find Him in a moment. Do not complain if you have not an edifying ministry, or because perhaps, this morning, the discourse seems dull to you; do not complain because you are lax in prayer, and have not that enlargement you ought to have in divine things; one word will take you up as on the wings of an eagle, and give you joy and peace!

Notice that as soon as the one word was given, *her heart acknowledged allegiance by another word*. She did not make a long speech. The Master’s heart was too full to say more than one word, and so was hers. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. What, then, is the word which suggests itself as being best adapted to a soul in the highest state of devotion? It is a word implying obedience. She said, “Master.” You can never get into a state of mind for which this confession of allegiance will be a word too cold. No, when your spirit glows the most with heavenly fire, then you will say, “I would serve You living, dying; Your love has bound me with cords to the horns of the altar; I am Your servant—I am Your servant—You have loosed my bonds.” If you can say, “Master,” this morning, you can say much. If your soul feels that His will is *your* will, that His law is your love—that you would, if you

could—in all things be conformed to His image, then, whether you have ecstasies or no ecstasies, whether you have joys or no joys—you stand in a happy, holy place! He must have said, “Mary,” or else she could not have said, “Rabboni.”

After she had confessed allegiance, the next impulse was *to seek close fellowship*; but she made a mistake as most of us would have done—she wanted a manifest, carnal fellowship. So she began to clasp Him, and to hold Him by the feet, and then He said, “Touch Me not.” We are apt to seek for communion with Christ in a sensuous way. Let us be spiritual, brethren. We shall never have Christ say to us, “Touch Me not,” if the touch is a touch of faith, and love. He only says, “Touch Me not,” when we want to handle Him with these hands, and see Him with these eyes. Let us walk by faith, and not by sight; and then we may take Him in our arms and keep Him there, and hold Him and not let Him go; and the more endearing we can be with Him spiritually, the better He will like it. We must shake off all those gross ideas which strive to mix with high and heavenly enjoyment. If you feel a desire this morning after near and close communion, do not restrain it; press forward, put your hands into His side, and your finger into the print of the nails. I know that worldlings will not understand me, but believers will. Let me assure you, there is a communion with Christ which is quite as real as if we had the privilege which Thomas had. My own soul has seen the Savior and talked with Him; though these eyes cannot see Him, though these lips cannot speak with Him, and these ears cannot hear Him, yet my soul’s mouth has kissed Him, and my soul’s ears have heard Him, and my heart’s mouth has blessed Him 10,000 times, and I hope to do it yet again, and will never be satisfied until I can do it continually. Press on, beloved—you may say as the divine Song does, “Oh that You were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find You outside, I would kiss You.” Oh,



beloved, hold communion with Him! Feed on Him, for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed.

Further, we may notice, as the result of her finding the Savior, *she entered in His service*, for He said, “Go, tell My brethren,” and away she went to tell others that she had found the Savior! If you have the privilege of seeing Christ, do not eat the morsel behind the door. Have you found honey? Taste it yourself, but go and tell others. You cannot have seen much of the Savior, unless you desire to let others see Him. Your piety is a sham, a flash in the pan, a will-o'-the-wisp if it does not lead to practical service. Are there not some Mary Magdalenes here who have had seven devils cast out of them? You have felt the power of divine grace in your heart; you love your Savior; you long for communion with Him. My dear sister, as soon as you have fellowship, let me charge you, in the Master's name—do not be afraid to speak to others what the Lord shall say in private to you! We do not allow women to enter the pulpit—that is a violation both of divine grace and nature—it is as much an offense to good manners as it is to God's own law. But you have your own sphere, you have your own place of work—you can gather your own sex about you; there are your children, your servants; you have multitudes of opportunities. Tell others that Jesus has risen, that there is a risen life—that you know it, and that you pant and long that others, too, should rise from the grave of sin to the new life in Jesus!

As for you, men and brothers, to whom it pertains more particularly to be teachers and pastors, I charge you, whatever you have found within the circle of fire where the closest communion is, whatever you have seen in the deep mines of mystery, whatever Christ has revealed to you in hours of retirement when you have come nearest to Him—tell it to His family, feed His flock with it—bring forth these things as

choice dainties where the beloved of the Lord may feast even to the full. “Go, tell my brethren,” said Christ, and so say we.

When the two disciples had journeyed to Emmaus, and at the evening meal, after the toil of the day’s journey was over, were resting themselves, you remember that the mysterious stranger, who had so enchanted them with His holy words, took bread and broke it, and then it was known to them in the breaking of the bread—but He vanished out of their sight! Well, what happened then? They had compelled Him to enter in and abide with them, because the day was far spent, but though now, much later, their love was a lamp to their feet! Yes, wings also, for they forgot the darkness and their despair; their weariness was all gone, and immediately they began to journey back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord who had appeared to them by the way. They reach the body of Christians in Jerusalem, and are received by a burst of joyful news, before they can tell their own tale. Now, brethren, these early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ’s resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord. They made common property of their experiences—and so ought we to do. John’s account of the sepulcher needs to be supplemented by Peter, and Mary can speak of something further still. Combined, we have a full testimony, and nothing can be spared. Thus, we have all peculiar gifts and special manifestations, but the one objective God has in view is the benefit of the whole body of Christ. We must, therefore, bring our possessions and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth of God, but speak what you know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil, or darkness, or possible unbelief of your hearers weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul! And if you hear

the sweet words of Christ, I can promise you a holy flame of bright and beaming joy as you speak of the truth of God to benefit the souls of others.

Finally, if there are any inquirers here, as I hope there are—if you are seeking Jesus this morning, and want to be saved by Him and through Him—remember, poor inquirer, that Jesus is near you now. There is *nothing* for you to do! No climbing to heaven, no going down to the depths to bring Him up; He is near you now.

If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you trust your soul to Him, you are saved! Jesus is here to everyone who will simply give himself up to Him to be saved by Him. Jesus calls you this morning by your name—He gives you a special invitation to come to Him. Listen to that name! Respond this morning—say, “Master.” Take Jesus to be your Lord—He deserves it. You are not your own, but you are bought with a price. Give yourself, as a blood-bought one, up to Him. He asks you as He asks Mary, “Woman, why do you weep?” He asks of each of you who are seeking Him, “Whom do you seek?” Do you know what it is you seek? Do you seek some strange feeling? Do you seek signs and wonders, dreams and visions? Seek them no longer! Jesus is what you need; take Him and be saved. There, close at your side, is the food your hungry spirit needs—look not up to heaven—look not down to earth! There is in Jesus all you need! Feed on, beloved—faith shall fill your mouth; love shall enjoy the sweet dainty, and your whole body, soul, and spirit shall be sanctified by the divine repast. May God bless you, dear friends, all of you, by giving you, like Mary Magdalene, to seek the Lord.

*[Portion of scripture read before sermon—John 20.]*

## **626 THE WATERER WATERED – PROV. 11:25**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 23rd, 1865,**

**by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“He who waters will also be watered himself.” — Proverbs  
11:25**

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE is that in living for the good of others, we shall be profited ourselves. We must not isolate our own interests, but feel that we live for others. This teaching is sustained by the analogy of nature, for in nature there is a law that no one thing can be independent of the rest of creation, but there is a mutual action and reaction of all upon all. All the constituent parts of the universe are bound to one another by invisible chains, and there is not a single creature in it which springs up, or flourishes, or decays itself alone. The very planets, though they float far from one another, exercise attraction; and the fixed stars, though they seem to be infinitely remote, are still linked to one another by mysterious bonds. God has so constituted this universe that selfishness is the greatest possible offense against His law, and living for others, and ministering to others is the strictest obedience to His will. Our surest road to our own happiness is to seek the good of our fellows. We store up in God's own bank what we generously expend on the behalf of our race. The little spring bubbling forth from the ancient pipe on the hillside overflows the stone basin, and liberally supplies all the villagers with pure and cooling drink.

In its flowing it does not waste itself, for the deep fountains in the heart of the earth continue unceasingly to supply it, and both in winter's frost and summer's drought the springhead yields its crystal stream. The little brook which babbles through the woods, hiding among stones, leaping down the moss-grown rocks, and soon deepening and swelling its stream, pours all its gatherings into the river hoarding not a drop, and though its treasure is constantly being lavished with unstinting generosity, yet heaven and earth see to it that the brook shall never fail to sing its joyous song—

“Men may come and go  
But I go on forever.”

The river hastens with its greater floods towards the all-receiving ocean—pouring itself out every hour with happy plenteousness, as though it only existed to empty itself; yet the abundant tributaries which come streaming from the hills, and draining the valleys, are careful that the river shall know no lack, but shall be kept constantly brimming, a joyous and bounding river forevermore!

The ocean perpetually sends up its steaming exhalations to the sky, grudging nothing; it puts no doors to its rolling waves, but uncovers all its treasure to the sun, and the sun makes large draughts upon the royal treasury of the deep. Nevertheless the ocean is not diminished, for all the rivers are constantly conspiring to keep the sea full to the shore. The clouds of heaven, when they are full of rain, empty themselves upon the earth, and yet the clouds cease not to be, for “they return after the rain,” and the ocean down below seems but to be too glad to be continually feeding its sister ocean on the other side of the firmament. So, as wheels with bands are made to work together—as wheels with cogs working upon one another—

the whole watery machinery is kept in motion by each part acting upon its neighbor, and the next upon the next. Each wheel expends its force upon its fellow, and the whole find recompense in their mutual action upon one another. The same truth might be illustrated from other departments of nature. If we view this microcosm, the human body, we shall find that the heart does not receive the blood to store it up, but while it pumps it in at one valve, it sends it forth at another. The blood is always circulating everywhere, and is stagnant nowhere. The same is true of all the fluids in a healthy body—they are in a constant state of expenditure. If one cell stores for a few moments its peculiar secretion, it only retains it till it is perfectly fitted for its appointed use in the body, for if any cell in the body should begin to store up its secretion, its store would soon become the cause of inveterate disease. No, the organ would soon lose the power to secrete at all if it did not give forth its products. The whole of the human system lives by giving. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you, and will not guide you, for if it does not perform its watchful office, the whole man will be in the ditch, and the eye will be covered with mire. If the members refuse to contribute to the general stock, the whole body will become poverty-stricken, and be given up to the bankruptcy of death. Let us learn, then, from the analogy of nature, the great lesson that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that to get good, and become spiritually vigorous, we must do good, and seek the spiritual good of others. This is the general principle.

The text suggests a particular personal application of the general principle. We shall consider it, first, *in its narrowest sense, as belonging to ourselves personally*; secondly, *in a wider sense, as it may refer to us as a church*; then, thirdly, *in its widest sense, as it may be*

*referred to the entire body of Christ*, showing that it is still true that as it waters, so it shall be watered itself.

**I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.**

There are some works, my brethren, in which we cannot all engage. Peculiar men are called to be God's great woodmen, to clear the way with the axe, to go before His army like our sappers and miners—such men as Martin Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli—that glorious trio of heroes marching in front of reformation and evangelization; they are cutting down the tall trees, tunneling the hills, and bridging the rivers. And we smaller men feel that there is little of this work for us to do. But when the backwoodsmen have cleared the forest, after all the roots are grubbed, and the soil is burned and plowed, then comes the sowing and the planting, and in this, all the household can take a place. And when the plants have sprung up and need water, it is not only the stalwart man with the axe who can now apply himself to watering, but even the little children can take a share in this lighter work. Watering is work for persons of all grades, and all sorts. If I cannot carry about me some ponderous load as the Eastern water-bearer can, yet I will take my little water pot, my little jug or pitcher, and go to the well; for if I cannot water the forest tree, I may water the tiny plant which grows at its root. Watering is work for all sorts of people; so, then, we will make a personal application to every Christian here this morning; you can all do something in watering, and this promise can therefore be realized by you all, "He who waters will also be watered himself."

*All God's plants, more or less, want watering.* You and I do. We cannot live long without fresh supplies of divine grace. Therefore the value of the promise, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment." There are no brooks at our roots as we grow in the soil of nature—it is only in the garden of grace that we are "like trees planted by the rivers of water,

bringing forth our fruit in our season.” If the Lord Jesus, who is the stem of the vine, should cease to supply us with the fresh sap of grace, would we not be like the withered branch which is cast over the wall to be burned in the fire?

*The Lord’s people usually get this watering through instrumentality.* God does not speak to us out of heaven with His own voice—perhaps the thunder might appall us; He does not write texts of Scripture with His own finger in letters of fire across the sky, but He waters us by instrumentality, by His Word written, and His Word preached, or otherwise uttered by His servants. His Holy Spirit waters us by the admonitions of parents, by the kind suggestions of friends, by the teaching of His ministers, by the example of all His saints. The Holy Spirit waters us, but He takes care to do it by our fellow workers, putting an honor upon His own servants by using them in instrumentality.

This being fully believed by us all, we may proceed to another truth of God, namely, that *some of His servants especially need watering* and should therefore, be the objects of our constant care. Some plants need watering from their peculiar nature. A gardener will tell you that certain flowers require very little water, perhaps for months they will grow in a stony soil, but others must be watered regularly and plenteously, or they will soon droop. Some of you, my dear brethren, are so desponding that if you did not receive much comfort, you would hardly hold up your heads at all; you are so weak in the faith that if you were not fed with milk continually you would scarcely be alive. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God”—is especially applicable to the mourners in Zion. Their constitutional temperament is such that to maintain the lamp of their joy they require much oil of comfort. Perhaps, too, they are *ignorant*, and the ignorant need much watering. If they knew the doctrines of grace more fully, they might go to the wells themselves—but not knowing where the water is, or



feeling, like the woman at the well, that the well is deep, and that there is nothing to draw with, they cannot get the water. And we, who are instructed in the way of God, must take care that we bring up the water for them with our longer length of the line of knowledge, so that they may not fail to be watered.

It may be the need is not so much caused by the nature of the plant, as by *the position in which it is placed*. Many of you, dear beloved, are very happily situated where you can constantly attend the means of grace, where the family altar smokes with sweet perfume, where you cannot help growing, for you are like plants in a hothouse. But there are others, on the contrary, who live in houses where *the jeer* is far more frequently heard than the voice of praise; where, instead of being helped in your devotions, you are hindered; your spirit is driven to and fro with distractions; from the very closet where you wanted to commune with God, you are forced out by cruel mocking. We ought to be very tender about your condition, as being planted on no fruitful hill, but on a very thirsty land where there is no water; your position should lead God's people to watch you with deepest interest, and see to it that you are well watered.

I may also mention the *sick*. When our dear friends are tried with bodily pain, when they are shut up week after week from public gatherings, then they need watering. Their position is such that we ought to be especially mindful of them. It is written, "*He carries the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.*" And *we* must note the peculiar condition of the saints of God, being most careful of those who most need our tenderness.

Let me also suggest *the young* to you. These need watering, both, let me say, from their character, and from their position. With little experience and little knowledge, they are prone to wander or to be seized by the wolf. Tend them with parental affection. When transplanted flowers are first put into the

ground, they need more water than they will later; when they have sent out more roots, and these roots have abundant fibers searching through the soil for moisture, they may not require much of the gardener's care, but just now they must have it or die. Therefore, I say, let the feeble, the weak, the young, the sick, the persecuted be watered most anxiously and lovingly by you all.

Certain dear friends need watering, not so much from their position and character as from *the present trials through which they are passing*. Certain plants, after long standing in the sun, droop their leaves, and look as if they must wither and die; but as soon as water is poured to their roots, it has sometimes perfectly surprised me to see how they recover! I could scarcely think that they were the same plants, their recovery was so sudden. The little roots beneath sent the message up to the main roots and said, "We have found out moisture, a friendly hand has given us a supply," and the root talked to the stem, and the stem rejoiced, and the great leaves drank up their share, and the little leaves sucked up their drops till the whole plant to the very summit was verdant once more and rejoiced. Times will come to all of us when we need water. I, myself, get very desponding at seasons, and I suppose you do, too. Unbelief dries us up. Oh that devil of unbelief! Why, if that demon were dead, the other devils we might very well contend with. Personal affliction, losses, crosses and burdens, make us just like the withering shrub, and then we need to have the consolations of some kind friend to water us.

Dear friends, sometimes there are those in the church who particularly need watering because they are *actually withering*. It is not to maintain verdure in their case but to restore it. Those backsliding ones, those who have slipped with their feet, do not cast them off, for God casts not off the backsliding one. When they begin to forsake the house of God, do not forsake *them*;

follow them with your tears. In such a church as this, if you do not exercise mutual oversight over one another we shall simply become a mass of corruption, instead of being a mountain of holiness. Watch over your brothers and sisters as soon as you see the first signs of declension. When they forsake prayer meetings, gently give them a hint of the evil of lukewarmness, and the danger of falling by little and little; when you mark the first sign in their outward carriage of laxity with regard to divine things, when you see coldness where there was formerly zeal, be sure to give a gentle word of earnest, moving admonition. As I look around this tabernacle, I can but compare these rising seats to shelves in the conservatory, and you are the plants which must all be watered, or you will languish and wither. And I, who have to be my Master's undergardener, am very anxious to say to all of you who have any water in your watering pots—help me water these plants—that, by the gracious operations of God, the Holy Spirit, they may be kept fruitful, green, verdant in spiritual things even to the end.

We now enter more thoroughly into our text, and observe that *all believers have power to water others*. You may not have much ability or influence, but you all have some power in this matter. In thinking over what Solomon meant, it struck me that he had in his mind's eye the plan of irrigation which is followed in some Eastern countries. The rivers at certain seasons overflow their banks. The careful farmers, whose farms are close along the sides of the bank, have large tanks and reservoirs in which they store up the water. After the flood the river is comparatively empty, and the little farms, the vineyards, and pastures on the banks begin to cry out for water; then the careful farmer lets out the water from his tank or reservoir by slow degrees, and uses it with great economy. It would sometimes happen that one of these farmers would have his reservoirs filled, and his neighbor, perhaps through the

bursting of a tank, or the falling down of the bank of earth, might have little or no water. At such times a greedy man would say, “I shall need all my water for myself, I will not lend or give so much as a drop of it. I have none to spare.” But the generous man says, “I do not know whether God may be pleased to send a drought or not, but I cannot let my neighbor lose all his crops for the lack of a little water, while I have a good stock in hand.” So he pulls up the sluice, and lets such a stream as he thinks he can spare flow into his neighbor’s channel, so that he may water his fields. Now Solomon says that those who water others shall be watered; therefore, next season it may happen that this good man may have no water himself; well, then, all the farmers round about will say, “Why, he helped us when his tank was full, and we will return his kindness into his bosom.” “Ah,” says one, “he saved me from ruin; I should not have had a crop at all last season if it had not been for him.” So they all lend a portion, till he finds no difficulty whatever— even in a season of drought. When men cannot get water for love or money, he is sure to have it. The common feeling of men, as a usual rule, recognizes the law of gratitude, and men say, “He watered others, he shall be watered himself.”

My dear brother, you may be a man of talent, you may be a man of wealth—just turn on the big tap, and let your ignorant or poor neighbors benefit a little by your abundance; pull up the floodgates, and let the more needy brethren be enriched by your fullness—open that mouth of yours that your wisdom may feed many; tell of what God has done for your soul, that the humble may hear and be glad. Do not be a reservoir brimmed up till the banks are ready to burst out through the weight which presses upon them— let some of the treasure run out! And when your need shall come—and who knows when it may overtake any of us?—you shall find willing friends who shall run with swift feet to cheer your adversity.

This simile needs to be supplemented by another—many true saints are unable to do much. See, then, the gardeners going down to the pond, and dipping in their watering pots to carry the refreshing liquid to the flowers. A child comes into the garden and wishes to help; and yonder is a little watering pot for him. Now, see that little water pot? Though it does not carry much, yet it carries the same water; and it does not make any difference to the half-dozen flowers which get that water, whether it came out of the big pot or the little pot, so long as it is the same water, and they get it! You who are like children in God's Church, you who do not know much, yet try and tell others what you do know, and if it is the same gospel truth, and it is blessed by the same Spirit—it will not matter to the souls who get blessed by you whether they were blessed by a man of one or 10 talents! What difference will it make to me whether I was converted to God by means of a poor woman who was never made a blessing to anybody else or by one who had brought his thousands to the Savior's feet? Go, my dear brethren, and exercise the holy art of watering! You ask, "How?" Why, a word may do it, a look may do it, an action may do it; only zealously desire to offer sympathy, to afford instruction, to give needed help, to impart what you may be favored with to others, and you shall be watered yourselves.

The main point is that *in so watering others we shall be watered ourselves*. I am sure we shall, for God promises it, and He always keeps His promise. If I need to get water, I must give water. Though that seems a strange way of self-serving I pray you try it. Was not that a very singular thing that when the poor woman of Sarepta had nearly exhausted all her meal, the prophet asked for a cake for himself? She had been saving it, I dare say, she had eaten only a mouthful or two every day. She and her poor boy were looking very thin. They had come to the last handful. She thought, "I will make one cake for my son and myself, and

then we will die.” She is outside picking up sticks that she may bake this cake. God intends to bless her. How does He do it? There comes His prophet, the hairy man, and the first word he says to her is, “Fetch me, I pray you, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” She is quite ready to serve anyone, and away she hastens for the water when Elijah cries aloud, “Bring me, I pray you, a morsel of bread in your hand.” What? Out of that little handful—barely enough for one? “Yes,” he says, “make me a little cake first, and after that make for you and your son.” “After that?” she might have said, “What will be left after that? When there is only a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, not enough for one, am I to give that to you, and *afterwards* see to myself and child?” Faith enabled her to obey, and from that very moment neither she nor her son ever knew what need was. She gave from her little, and her little multiplied. The case of the woman of Zarephath is but one of thousands establishing the rule of God’s mode of action with His Church—a rule which shall not be broken till time shall end.

Let me show you how you will get watered yourself. In the first place, if you try to do good to others, it will do you good by *waking up your powers*. Thousands of men do not know what they are made of. You have no idea what a fine fellow you are, young man, till you begin to shake yourself a little, and go forth to fight the Lord’s battles. We do not know what sinews we have till we climb the mountains; we do not know what strength there may be in our backs and arms, till we have to carry a ponderous load, and then we find out. You have latent talents, dormant faculties, which would work wonders if you would call them forth. Some people are not awake more than skin deep; all underneath the skin is sound asleep. They are like the great candle which I showed you one night with a small wick, which was only melted a little in the middle, while all the outside was still cold, hard tallow, and did not contribute to the

light. You have not become warm through and through yet—your whole soul has not been wound up to the right pitch for serving God—you have only a little earnestness, a little zeal; but if you ventured upon holy enterprises, you would bestir yourself so thoroughly that you would scarcely know yourself again. That would be a blessing, indeed.

But next, *you would often find that in trying to water others you gained instruction*. Go talk to some poor saint to comfort her, and she will tell you what will comfort you. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures, we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. We went to talk experiential truth, and we found we were only up to the ankles, while here were God's poor saints, chest deep in the river of divine love. We learn by teaching, and our pupils often teach us.

You will also *get comfort in your work*. Rest assured that working for others is very happy exercise. Like the two men in the snow; one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing he kept his own blood in circulation, and his own life was preserved. Comfort God's people and the comfort will return into your own soul.

Watering others will make you *humble*. You will find better people in the world than yourself. You will be astonished to find how much divine grace there is where you thought there was none—and how much knowledge some have gained, while you, as yet, have made little progress with far greater opportunities.

You will also *win many prayers*. Those who work for others get prayed for, and that is a swift way of growing rich in grace. Let me have your prayers, and I can do anything! Let me be without my people's prayers, and I can do nothing. You Sunday school teachers, if you are blessed to the conversion of the children, will get your children's prayers. You who conduct the

larger classes, in the conversion of your young people, you will be sure to have a wealth of love come back into your own bosoms, swimming upon the stream of supplication. You will thus be a blessing to yourselves.

In watering others *you will get honor to yourselves*, and that will help to water you by stimulating your future exertions. The Romans appointed censors in their State—not only to censure men for gross immoralities—but to require every man to give an account of what he was doing for the good of the Republic. We have deacons and elders—would it not be an additional blessing to have censors in the church, to go round and ask the members, all of them, what they are doing for the good of the Christian Church? A Greek historian desired very intensely to say a word about the people of the city where he was born. He felt he could not write his history without saying something of his own native place, and accordingly he wrote this—“While Athens was building temples, and Sparta was waging war, my countrymen were doing nothing.” I am afraid there are too many Christians of whom, if the book were written as to what they are doing in the church, it would have to be said they have been doing nothing all their lives. You would be delivered from that reproach if you began to water others.

Let me cease from this subject by saying while you are watering others, *you will be manifesting and showing your love to Christ, and that will make you more like He*, and so you will be watered while you are seeking to benefit your neighbors. To serve Jesus! What need I say of that? Look into that face bedewed with bloody sweat for you, and can you not sweat for Him? Look at those hands pierced for you, and shall your hands hang idly down and not be used for Him? Look at those feet fastened to the wood with nails for you, and can I ask of you any pilgrimage too long to repay the toil which those feet endured for your sake? My brethren, remember what Christ Jesus has done for



you, from where He came, the riches which He left, to what He came, the poverty and shame which He endured, and how He went down into the depths that He might take us up to the heights. If you will think of these, you will have the best motive, I think, for beginning to look after His lambs, and fighting with those lions which seek to devour His flock; and in that moving motive will be the main means by which you shall be conformed to His image, and shall become like He—self-sacrificing, doing your Father's business.

I wish I could speak more powerfully this morning, but the matter ought to speak for itself with Christians. If we love Jesus, we shall not need any pleading with to water His plants. If you really love Him, it will not be a question of whether you shall do something, the only question will be, "What can I do?" And you will say in your pew this morning, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" He has spared your lives, He has given you health and strength, provided you with spirituals and temporals, He has made your heart leap for joy at the sound of His name, He has plucked you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, He has taken you out of the black bondage of the Prince of Darkness, and made you His sons and daughters. He has put the ring of His eternal love upon your finger; your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—

"This world is yours, and worlds to come,  
Earth is your lodge and Heaven your home."

There is a crown for your head, and a palm branch for your hand, and there are pavements of gold for your feet and felicities forever for your entire soul; and even your body is to be raised again from the dust, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for you.” Now what will you do for Him? Will you not win the promise that your soul shall be watered, by seeking to water the souls of others?

**II. A BRIEF EXHORTATION** shall suffice for the second point. This general principle is worthy of a wider application.

We, as a church, dear friends, have enjoyed singular prosperity. While many churches have been depressed and decreased in numbers, we have increased. While other churches have had the hectic flush of a spurious revival, we have had one perpetual revival lasting for nearly 12 years. I do not know that we have increased at a more or a less rapid rate; we could not increase more quickly, for we have not officers enough, or time enough to see the converts as it is. We have never, I think, increased less, for the work seems to always have the same prosperity about it. I praise God that I can say of my ministry in this place and elsewhere, that to this day it has the dew of its youth upon it, and there are as many rejoicing to find Christ, through the agencies employed in this church, today as in the first day when we came among you, in the freshness and vigor of our youth. We have had no schism; we have had no division; we have not been vexed with heresy. We have been blessed with something like persecution, but this has only bound us the closer to one another, till we are like a three-fold cord which cannot be broken. And like iron bars made red hot in the furnace, and hammered together, we are not soon to be separated from one another.

Now, dear friends, up to this time the policy which we have pursued has been this—if members of other churches want to know, we tell them, *we have endeavored to water others*. Your minister has journeyed all over the three kingdoms preaching the word, and you have not grumbled at his absence. We have undertaken many enterprises for Christ; we hope to undertake

a great many more. We have never hindered our strength; we have undertaken enterprises that were enough to exhaust us, to which, by God's grace, we became accustomed in due season, and then we have gone on to something more. We have never sought to hinder the planting of other churches from our midst or in our neighborhood. It is with cheerfulness that we dismiss our twelves, our twenties, our fifties, to form other churches. We encourage our members to leave us to found other churches—no—we seek to *persuade* them to do it! We ask them to scatter throughout the land to become the goodly seed which God shall bless. I believe that as long as we do this, we shall prosper. I have marked other churches that have adopted the other way, and they have not succeeded. This is what I have heard from some ministers—"I do not encourage village stations or, if I do, I do not encourage their becoming distinct churches and breaking bread together. I do not encourage too many young men going out to preach, for to have a knot of people who can preach a little, may, very soon cause dissatisfaction with my own preaching." I have marked those who have followed this course, and I have seen that the effect of trying to keep all the blood in the heart is to bring on congestion, and very soon the whole body has been out of health. My brothers, if you can do more good elsewhere than you can do here, for God's sake, go, and happy shall I be that you have gone. If you can serve my Master in the little rooms in the neighborhood—if by forming yourselves into smaller churches you can increase the honor of my Master's name, I shall love you none the less for going— and I shall delight to think that you have Christ's spirit in you, and can do and dare for His name's sake! At the present moment we rejoice to know that many a Sunday school in this neighborhood is indebted to the members of this church for teachers. It is right. We do not need you at home, and are therefore glad to see you at work

elsewhere. No matter, so long as Christ is preached, whether you throw your strength into that church or into this church. Here, as being members with us, we have the first claim upon you; but when we do not need you by reason of our abundance of men, go and give your strength to any other part of Christ's Church that may desire you.

While I speak thus much in your praise, my brethren, let me say, we must keep this up. We must not say, "We have the college to support, and we do as much as other churches for various societies, and we can be content to sit still." This church will begin to go rotten at the core the moment we are not working for God with might and main. Sometimes I get a pull at my coattail by very kind, judicious friends, who think I shall ask you to do too much. My brethren are welcome to pull my coattail, but it will come off before I shall stand back for a moment! As long as I live, I must serve my Master with my whole soul, and when you think I go too fast, you can stand back *if you dare*, for mark—you will be responsible to God if you do; you may start back if you will, and if you dare, but I must go on, *must* go, **MUST** go on, or else I die; and you who are worthy of the day in which we live will follow me, step by step, in any good project, and though I should seem too rash, you will redeem me from the charge of rashness by the enthusiasm, and the earnestness with which you carry out my plans. Here is this great city! Was there ever such spiritual destitution? A million people who could not go to a place of worship if they had the heart to go there! And here we have the priest-craft of the Church of England increasing the spiritual destitution by building fresh churches—not providing for it, but increasing it, I say—for I reckon that wherever Puseyism is preached, there is an increase of spiritual destitution; wherever broad Churchism comes, there is an increase of spiritual destitution, and it is little better where they go who preach the

Gospel in the pulpit, and read Popery at the font, the grave, and the bedside. In this last case public morality is shocked by the perjury of those who swear to a prayer book in which they do not believe. Much as I respect and even love believers in the Anglican Establishment, I can only feel that their presence in so corrupt a body is the reason why it exists; and I therefore think them to be doing mischief by buttressing a falling and ruinous cause.

True Protestants, we must take upon ourselves to work for London, as if there were no other agencies at work except those of the Free Churches; for the Hagar Church, the church which has a mortal for its head—the harlot church which lives in alliance with the State has too many sins of her own to repent of, to be of much use in this hour of peril. The good she can do is so insignificant that it is not worthwhile to compute it, because the monstrous evil which she fosters and perpetrates is a more than sufficient set-off against it. *We* must work and toil, and labor to scatter in every lane, alley, and court of London, the pure gospel of the blessed God; and we must let men know that Sacramentarianism is a lie, and that there is no salvation but in the uplifted cross of Christ, and no salvation through ceremonies but only through a simple faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. If you, among others, are come to the kingdom for such a time as this, it shall be well with you; but if not, you shall be put away as things abhorred, and this place shall be a hissing, and a by-word in generations yet to come, and it shall be said of you—“There lived a people who were led by a man, who, with all his faults, was in earnest and was honest, and they would not follow him, but proved unworthy of him, and they have passed away, and their names were written in water. They had opportunities which they did not use; work was allotted them which they were not worthy to

take up, God said to them in answer to their request to be excused, ‘You shall be excused.’ And they went back—

“To the vile dust from where they sprung,  
Unwept, unhonored and unsung.”

But it shall not be so with you, my brethren; though I thus speak, I know your zeal, and love, and earnestness, and that you will continue to water others, and then you shall be watered yourselves. We will pray and strive together for the faith once delivered to the saints; we will cleave closer and closer to one another, and foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder we will march to battle for God and for His truth. And come what may, whoever else may prove a coward in these days of charity and compromise, *we* will be found, in God’s name, by the help of God’s Spirit, faithful and true.

**III.** And now, dear friends, another sentence or two will close the sermon. On the widest scale, this is true. This is true of our denomination, and of every church. If we will water others, we shall be watered. From the very day when Carey, and Fuller, and Pearce, went forth to preach the gospel to the heathen, a blessing rested upon our denomination, I believe, and if we had done more for the heathen, we would have been stronger to do more at home. You may rest assured, though some may not think it, that our missionary operations are an infinite blessing to the churches at home—that relinquishing them, giving them up, stopping them, would bring such a blight and a curse that we had need to go down on our knees and pray, “God send the missionary work back again. Give us an outlet for our generosity and our zeal, for without it we become like a pool dammed up that is full of filth, and toads, and frogs, and all sorts of foul things. Lord, open the river for our zeal, and let us once again have an opportunity to serve You for the

nations that are far away!” But I must leave *you* to preach on that point, for my time has gone, and you can do so more practically than I can. My sermon is reported, and I will undertake that what you preach shall not be forgotten—it shall all be taken down in those boxes which shall be passed round. Say each of you as much as ever you can upon this subject by your contributions, and remember, “He who waters will also be watered himself.”

## 627 JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY – ROM. 8:30

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 30th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” — Romans  
8:30

WELL SAID the apostle in another place, “All things are of God,” and here in this passage all works of divine grace are evidently so. The pronoun, “He,” is repeated yet again and again, as if to set the Lord always before us. “Whom *He* did foreknow, *He* also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” “Moreover, whom *He* did predestinate, them *He* also justified, and whom *He* justified, them He also glorified.” It is of God all the way through. There is not an inch of ground left to be covered by the creature’s foot. The eternal Creator works all things in the covenant of grace according to the counsel of His own will. Haldane has an admirable note on this passage, which we will quote in full—“In looking back on this passage, we should observe that in all that is stated, man acts no part, but is passive and all is done by God. He is elected, and predestinated, and called, and justified, and glorified by God. The apostle was here concluding all that he had said before in enumerating topics of consolation to believers; and he is now going on to show that God is ‘for us,’ or on the part of His people. Could anything, then, be more consolatory to those who love God, than to be in this manner assured that the



great concern of their salvation is not left in their own keeping? God, even their covenant God, has taken the whole upon Himself. He has undertaken for them. There is no room, then, for chance or change. He will perfect that which concerns them.”

Does not this account for the majestic manner in which these covenant mercies follow one another as in a triumphal procession? Foreknowledge leads the procession with eyes beaming with love, then come predestination, calling, justification, glorification, all in their proper order. Not one of these gigantic mercies limps along the road—but marching with stately tread, adorned in robes of glory, each one keeping its place, they make up a magnificent procession to the praise of the glory of His grace who has set them all in order, and written His own name upon them all. Observe there is no, “if,” no, “but,” no, “maybe,” no, “perhaps,” here. He foreknows. He predestinates. No creature lifts up its puny voice to object to the predestinating decree. Having predestinated, He calls, and it is such an effectual calling, that we hear of no resistance. Having called, He justifies, and “Who is he who condemns?” Having justified without let or hindrance, He achieves His eternal purpose without impediment, and brings forth the topstone of the temple of His grace with shouts, as it is written, “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Let our souls be glad as we clearly see the mighty presence of our God in every work of divine grace, and let us understand from where the force, the certainty, the immutability, the majesty of the whole matter comes—namely, from the fact that, “He orders all things according to the counsel of His own will,” and “Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?”

This morning, God the Holy Spirit, I trust, will make it to your profit to weigh these two precious gems of loving-kindness, to count over these priceless treasures of mercy, to

swim in these two seas of love, justification, and glorification; and then, we shall need time to carefully search after the connection between them both, for they are riveted together by rivets of diamonds; they are fastened together so fast and firmly, that neither death nor hell can separate them. “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

**I.** Let us begin, then, by considering **WHAT IT IS TO BE JUSTIFIED.**

If you wish for an answer in a few words, ask your children who have learned our catechism, and you have it—“Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” Perhaps, however, I had better unfold this truth of God in detail. You will perceive by reading the connection, and by a moment’s reflection, that the justification here meant *is an act of God passed upon a person needing it*, consequently passed upon a person who could not justify himself; a person naturally guilty of sin, and being in a state of condemnation naturally, and needing to be lifted out of it by an act of justification of a divine order. It is not possible that God should have devised a plan of justification for those who were already justified by their own actions. We do not talk with any wonder, or speak with any astonishment of a justification which a man achieves for himself. The guiltless need no justification; they have it already. If any man has kept the law of God, and made it honorable, he is in himself just, and needs not to be made just—he is so already. Justification is an act of divine grace passed upon a sinner, upon one who has transgressed the law and cannot be justified by it, and who, therefore, needs to be made just in another way, a way out of his own reach, above his own coming and going, as in the text, from God Himself; for it says, “*He justifies.*” This, though it is a very commonplace observation,

is a very sweet truth of God to begin with. Oh, sinner! However black your sins may have been, you may yet be justified! Though your sins are as scarlet, they may yet be as wool; and though you are red like crimson, you may be white as snow. It is written that, “He justifies the ungodly.” Yes, the *ungodly*—such as *you* have been! Christ came not into the world as a Physician for those who are whole, but for those who are sick. Justification is an act of grace which looks out for a sinner upon whom to exercise itself. May the eyes of grace find you out this morning, poor transgressor, and make you just.

In the next place, justification *is the result of sovereign grace* and of sovereign grace alone. We are told that, “By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” And yet again, “Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” I cannot *earn* justification. Nothing which I can ever do can merit justification at the hands of God. I have so offended that all which is due to me is God’s wrath, and that forever. If I shall ever be accounted just, it must be because God wills to make me just; it must be because out of His divine compassion, and for no other reason whatever, He looks upon me in my sin and misery, lifts me up from the dunghill of my ruin, and determines to wrap me about with the royal apparel of a righteousness which He has prepared. There is no justification, then, as an act of merit; the day for that was past when Adam fell, and when we fell in him. Justification now comes as a priceless gift from the generous hand of God’s grace.

Justification has for its matter and means the righteousness of Jesus Christ, set forth in His vicarious obedience both in life and death. Certain modern heretics, who ought to know better, have denied this, and there were some in older times who, by reason of ignorance, said that there was no such thing as the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. He who denies this, perhaps unconsciously, cuts at the root of the gospel system. I

believe that this doctrine is involved in the whole system of substitution and sanctification. We all know that substitution and a vicarious sacrifice are the very marrow of the gospel of Christ. The law, like the God from whom it came, is absolutely immutable, and can be satisfied by nothing else than a complete and perfect righteousness, at once suffering the penalty for guilt already incurred, and working out obedience to the precept which still binds those upon whom penalty has passed. This was rendered by the Lord Jesus as the Representative of His chosen, and is the sole legal ground for the justification of the elect. As for me, I can never doubt that Christ's righteousness is mine, when I find that Christ Himself, and all that He has belongs to me; if I find that He gives me *everything*, surely He gives me His righteousness among the rest. And what am I to do with that if not to wear it? Am I to lay it by in a wardrobe, and not put it on? Well, sirs, let others wear what they will—my soul rejoices in the royal apparel. For me, the term, "The Lord our righteousness" is significant and has a weight of meaning. Jesus Christ shall be my righteousness as long as I read the language of the apostle, "He is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

My dear brethren, do not doubt the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, whatever faultfinders may say. Remember that you must have a righteousness. It is this which the law requires. I do not read that the law made with our first parents required suffering; it demanded it as a penalty after its breach; but the righteousness of the law required not suffering, but obedience. Suffering would not release us from the duty of obeying. Lost souls in hell are still under the law, and their woes and pangs, if completely endured, would never justify them. Obedience, and obedience alone, can justify, and where can we have it but in Jesus our substitute? Christ comes to magnify the law—how does He do it but by obedience? If I am to enter into life by the

keeping of the commandments, as the Lord tells me in the 19th chapter of Matthew, and the 17th verse, how can I, except by Christ having kept them? And how can He have kept the law except by obedience to its commands? The promises in the Word of God are not made to suffering; they are made to obedience—consequently, Christ's sufferings, though they may remove the penalty, do not, alone, make me the inheritor of the promise. "If you will enter into life," said Christ, "keep the commandments." It is only Christ's keeping the commandments that entitles me to enter life. "The Lord is well-pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." I do not enter into life by virtue of His sufferings—those deliver me from death, those purge me from filthiness, but, entering the enjoyments of the life eternal must be the result of obedience; and as it cannot be the result of mine, it is the result of His which is imputed to me. We find the apostle Paul putting Christ's obedience in contrast to the disobedience of Adam—"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Now, this is not Christ's death, but Christ's active obedience, which is here meant, and it is by this that we are made righteous. Beloved, you need not sing with stammering tongues that blessed verse of our hymn—

"Jesus, Your perfect righteousness,  
My beauty is, my glorious dress."

In spite of all the outcry of modern times against this doctrine, it is written in heaven, and is a sure and precious truth of God to be received by all the faithful, that we are justified by faith through the righteousness of Christ Jesus imputed to us. See what Christ has done in His living and in His dying, His acts becoming our acts, and His righteousness being imputed

to us, so that we are rewarded as if we were righteous, while He was punished as though He had been guilty.

This justification, then, comes to sinners as an act of pure grace, the foundation of it being Christ's righteousness. *The practical way of its application is by faith.* The sinner believes God, and believes that Christ is sent of God, and takes Christ Jesus to be his only confidence and trust, and by that act, he becomes a justified soul. It is not by repenting, but by believing that we are justified! It is not by deep experience of the guilt of sin; it is not by bitter pangs and throes under the temptations of Satan; it is not by mortification of the body, nor by the renunciation of self. All these are good, but the act which *justifies* is a look at Christ! We, having nothing, being nothing, boasting of nothing, and being utterly emptied, look to Him whose wounds stream with life-giving blood, and as we look to Him, we live and are justified by His life. There is life in a look at the crucified One, and life in the sense of justification. He who a minute before was, in himself, a condemned criminal, fit only to be taken to the place from where he came and to suffer divine Wrath, is at once, by an act of faith, made an heir of God, joint-heir with Jesus Christ—taken from the place of condemnation, and put into the place of acceptance, so that now he dreads no more the wrath of God; the curse of God cannot touch him, for Christ was made a curse for him, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

Now, concerning this great mercy of justification, let us say that it is *instantaneous*. Sanctification needs a whole life. Justification is the work of a second, perhaps it needs no appreciable time. The sinner looks to Christ, it is all done—his sin is gone in a moment. The righteousness of Christ is, as in an instant, imputed to the believing sinner. Sanctification, however, progresses or declines; it is a thing of changes; the work of the Holy Spirit sometimes ripens swiftly, and at other

times, by reason of temptation or trial within, it is but slow in its advance; but justification is complete in a moment! The dying thief was as clean one moment after he had trusted in Christ as he was when he was with Christ in Paradise. Justification in heaven is not more complete than it is on earth. No, listen to me, child of God, when your soul seems to be a very pandemonium through the blasphemies of Satan; when your doubts and fears leap upon you like so many lions; when your sins prevail against you so that you cannot look up, yet, if you are a believer, you are even then, in your worst moments, as completely and perfectly *justified* as in those happy days when on Tabor's summit you were apt to say, "Let us build three tabernacles, and here abide." Justification never alters in a child of God. God pronounces him guiltless, and guiltless he is. Jehovah justifies him, and neither his holiness can improve his righteousness, nor his sins diminish it. He stands in Christ Jesus the same yesterday, today, and forever—as accepted one moment as at another moment—as sure of eternal life at one instant as at another. Oh, how blessed is this truth of God—justified in a moment and justified completely!

And observe, my dear brethren, that he who is thus justified is justified *infallibly*. There is no mistake concerning the transaction. "It is God who justifies." Where, then, can there be a mistake? If I justify myself, I am a fool, and I make God a liar; but if God justifies me, who is he that condemns? I, a poor sinner, black as night, fly to the shelter of the great Shield stained with blood which God holds over my head, and there I stand at all times; and though I know that every lightning of justice might well dart its force upon me, as I am in myself, yet as I see my Shield, the Lord's Anointed, I am not afraid. Standing under that Shield, I defy heaven, and earth, and hell! Crying in the language of Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that

condemns?” There is a prisoner at the bar, and the jury has just brought in a verdict of, “Not guilty.” The judge bids him go free. There are people in the court who gnash their teeth at him; there are persons in the street who hate him—what does he care? “I have been pronounced, ‘Not guilty,’ by the proper tribunal; the judge himself tells me that I am acquitted; no law officer can touch me; the fiercest enemy in the world cannot drag me into court again; I have been tried, and found, ‘Not guilty,’ and who is he that condemns?” It is just so with the Christian. Christ’s righteousness is put upon him. Christ takes his sins, and when he stands before God’s bar, the eternal voice seems to say, “I see no sin in that man.” How can He? All that man’s sins Christ took away! The eternal voice sounds forth again, “I can see righteousness there.” And well He may see it, for Christ’s righteousness is there, and therefore the man is infallibly, upon grounds of justice which are not disputable—infallibly, upon grounds which he himself may realize as being certain—justified through Christ Jesus!

Remember, dear brethren—and I will not occupy you much longer over a theme where we might be tempted to stay, that this justification is *irreversible*. Once justified you shall never be condemned. Jehovah never plays fast and loose with men. He does not look upon a sinner and say, “I forgive you,” and then afterwards say, “Depart, you cursed!” Arminians may think so, but the God of believers will not do so. The God of Christians says, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Having taken the prodigal into the house, and put the ring on his finger, and the shoes on his feet, He never turns that prodigal out of doors. Being married to His people, He never sues for divorce, for the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away. “I, even I, am He that blots out your iniquities for My name’s sake, and will not remember them against you anymore forever.” “I have cast



your iniquities into the depths of the sea.” Pardon and justification are irreversible, and consequently, the blessings which justification brings to us belong to us by a promise that can never be broken, forever and ever. If I am justified, then I have peace with God, and that peace shall be like a river, never dried up, because my righteousness is like the waves of the sea, never exhausted. If I am justified, I can claim Jehovah’s protection; and I shall have it, for He will not allow the just man to perish. If I am justified, I may come before God and ask for heaven as my *right*, as a reward of righteousness imputed to me, and I shall have it, for He will never deny to a justified person the fullness of joy which is at His right hand forevermore. Oh, what a blessing to be justified!

Once more, before I leave this point, I must ask you to be kind enough to question yourselves as to whether you have been justified. “Well,” says one, “perhaps I have been, and do not know it.” My dear friend, I do not think so. The work of justification is generally attended with such a flood of joy that I think you *must* know it. Bunyan’s pilgrim did not lose the burden off his back and not know it! As soon as it was gone, he gave three great leaps for joy, and went on his way singing. You may have doubts about whether you are justified—I hope you will not be easy under them, but will seek after an assured interest in Christ. My dear brethren, if you have any doubt, go to Christ again! If you are not justified, go to Him to be justified; just as you are, with nothing but the plea of His blood in your mouth—go to Him—for He casts out none who come unto God by Him. Know that the act of faith justifies, and be not afraid to exercise that act of faith, notwithstanding all your shortcomings and your sins. “Hear me, Jesus! If I never was a saint, I am a sinner, and You did come to save sinners, and so I cast myself on You. Your promise is that You will cast out

none who come. Oh, cast me not out! Receive even me, and accept me for Your love's sake."

II. Thus much upon justification. And now a little upon GLORY. How that golden word has been debased in the coinage of human speech. It has come to mean the glitter of war's helmet and the noise of the crowd's hurrahs. Smollet called it, "The fair child of peril." Johnson wrote—

"Glory, the casual gift of thoughtless crowds,  
Glory, the bride of greedy virtue!"

It is a far other and higher glory of which we speak today. As high as the heaven is above the earth is God's glory from all the poor stuff which mortals dignify with that fair name.

"Whom He justified, them He also glorified." They follow close together, you see. A little stream divides them, but the apostle says nothing about it, and you and I need not say much. It is a narrow stream called death—there is no glory without passing through that, or through the great change when the Lord comes. But there is nothing said about it, and so we will not say anything. It is not worth thinking of. It is swallowed up in victory. It may be an enemy, but it is an enemy that is to be destroyed. Now, while speaking of glory, I think I must divide the glory which God gives to the justified into three parts. There is, first of all, the glory which disembodied spirits are enjoying even now. There is, secondly, the resurrection glory, which they will enjoy when the soul and body shall be reunited, and when, through the millennium, they shall be "forever with the Lord." And then, there is "the eternal weight of glory," which is to be revealed both in body and soul in the never-ending state of bliss which God has prepared for His people.

Let us raise our thoughts a little while to *the state of disembodied spirits*. The moment that the soul leaves the body,

the believing soul, the justified soul is in glory. We know that there is no preparatory process for it to pass through. Romanism holds that some of the best saints go to heaven when they die, but that the great mass of inferior saints are not qualified for heaven, and must undergo a purgation for a series of years till they are prepared to enter glory. They say that the saints who died under the Old Testament, or at least the most of them, went to the *limbus patrum*—which some wicked Protestants call limbo—where they remained without the Beatific Vision until the Lord Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, and led them up afterwards to heaven with Him. As for the grossly wicked, who have by “mortal sin” lost the grace of baptism, they go to hell at once. But the better sort of partially sanctified Christians must suffer more or less intensely till their sins are atoned for and purged away. It was well said by Hugh Latimer that the key of purgatory hangs in the Pope’s treasury, for, he said, it has helped to keep it pretty full—and I have no doubt it has! It has been a very profitable invention! More money has been paid, I suppose, for getting souls out of purgatory than people have been tempted to pay in order to keep them out of hell. However, we are not deceived in this matter! Let the Council of Trent say what it may, the case of the dying thief is to the point. He was no eminent saint. He had not for many years performed works above what is required by which he reached perfection, and could claim that the gates should be opened to him. He was a sinner up to the very last moment, and the only good deed that we ever read of his doing, was when he claimed Christ as Lord, and rebuked his fellow thief for slandering the Savior. Yet, hear the words—“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.”

Nor is this the only instance. We find, when Lazarus died, according to the parable, that he was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom, a place of unspeakable rest and delight,

which the rich man greatly envied. Stephen expected the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, and the apostle Paul was in a strait betwixt two, being willing “to depart and to be with Christ.” He evidently did not anticipate any delay between earth and heaven, for he says, “Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” He puts the two as an alternative. We are not in trouble about those who sleep; we know that they that sleep in Jesus, and He will bring them with Him. In Ephesians 3:15, the apostle mentions the whole family as being in heaven and earth, but he speaks of none of the Lord’s people being in limbo or purgatory. Those whom we are bid to follow, in Hebrews 6:12, are now inheriting the promises. Let the voice of God decide the case forever. Revelation 14:13—“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

Perhaps that word, “Paradise,” which Christ uses to describe the state of disembodied spirits, may be a help to us in judging of the condition of the blessed. Paradise was a place of perfect peace, of sinlessness, of rest, of enjoyment, and freedom from evil. Eden! Oh, how shall we talk of its glories long since faded? Let us, however, remember its winding walks among trees loaded with luscious fruits. Let us remember the glory of its rising and its setting sun; the immortality, the peace, the joy, the love, the brightness which our first parents enjoyed in their naked innocence. That happy garden is a faint picture of the naked spirits, unclothed with bodies, who are now before the eternal throne; they have no pain, nor weariness, no evil, nor fear of death. They possess everything that can make them blessed except the resurrection body—

“There fruits that never fade,  
On trees immortal grow;  
There, rocks, and hills, and floods, and vales,  
With milk and honey flow.”

I think Dr. Watts was right when he said—

“There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers.”

They are in a blessed state of tranquility and perfection; but the Savior added, what was the beauty of all—“Today shall you be *with Me* in Paradise.” The glory of Paradise was that God walked there in the cool of the evening with His creatures; and the glory of heaven is that, “They need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light,” and the days of their mourning shall be ended. God wipes away all tears from their eyes, and the Lamb leads them to the living fountains of waters. God is with them to be their God, and they are with Him to be His happy people at His right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore. This is the state of the justified disembodied spirits now.

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God. Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial—that is, after the thousand years of His reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be premillennial—that He will come first, and then will come the millennium as the result of His personal reign upon earth. But whether or not, this much is fact—Christ will suddenly come, come to reign, and come to judge the earth in righteousness. Now, at that time, those of us,

who are alive and remain, shall have no preference over them who sleep. It is true, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Christ will bring with Him those who sleep in Him. Their bodies are now in that state which is called sleep—that is, a state of hallowed rest, tranquility, and enjoyment—but they shall come with Him. Lo, He comes with ten thousands times ten thousands of His saints. Then, from beds of dust and silent clay, their bodies shall wake up. The *very* bodies that were put into the tomb shall rise instinct with life. I say the *very* bodies; as it is not necessary to that, that there should be the very same particles of matter. My body is the same body that it was ten years ago, yet I am told, and I believe it, that there is not a particle of matter in my body now that was in it ten years ago; and yet its identity is not disturbed by that fact! Protect the germ, as God doubtless will, the life-germ of the seed corn which you sow in the earth—protect that, and you have protected identity; and though when we rise, it will not be as flesh and blood, “For flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption,” yet it shall be the same body, for all bodies are not the same bodies, for there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; and the glory is not the same—for there is the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon, and of the stars. So I may have the same body, the same for identity, and yet as to its constituent elements, and especially as to its qualities of weakness, mortality, and corruption, it may be as distinct and changed as light is distinct and changed from darkness.

Oh, my brethren, let this be an assured truth of God to us that we do not put the body into the grave to lose it! Watts is right when he says—

“Corruption, earth, and worms  
Do but refine this flesh.”

We put the body there as the chemist puts gold into the furnace; it shall come out the same as to its gold, but the dross shall be left behind. All that was precious in the fabric shall remain—that which was corruptible, defiled, sinful, shall have passed away.

According to our belief, the soul will then return to the body. There will be a joyful meeting. Soul and body often quarrel here; but they are always loath to part, which proves how true is the wedlock between them; but what a happy meeting it will be when there will be no more quarrels between this husband and wife—when the soul and body shall be merged together in the perfection of union! Then, whatever may be the splendor of Christ will be the splendor of His people. Our bodies shall be like His glorious body, and we ourselves shall be like He—

“It does not yet appear  
How great we must be made;  
But when we see our Savior here,  
We shall be like our Head.”

Will He reign? We shall reign with Him. Will He judge the earth? “Know you not that *you* shall judge angels.” “The saints shall judge the world.” Will *He* be ruler over cities? He will make us ruler over many cities. All the splendor and triumph and victory and shouting—we shall have a share! And when the grand song of praise shall go up from earth, and land, and sea, and from the depths that are under the earth, our tongue shall swell the tremendous chorus, and our ears shall be a partaker

of the ever-blessed harmony! Let us not fear. “Whom He justified, them He also glorified”—both in the sense of giving their disembodied spirits joy, and giving the soul and body power to reign with Him.

Well, and what then? Then comes the end—when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when the mediatorial dispensation shall be finished, what then? Will the earth be renovated and fitted up anew as a new heaven and a new earth? Will that new Jerusalem, that is to come down at the coming of Christ, be the future abode of saints? We do not know, and we do not care one whit! This much we know that we shall be forever with the Lord! With Christ shall be the heaven of believers forever, according to the Lord’s own prayer, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.”

If I might very hastily divide this glory into its constituent elements, I think I should say it means perfect rest. “There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God.” Life in its fullest sense! Life with emphasis! Eternal life! Nearness to God! Closeness to the divine heart! A sense of His love shed abroad in all its fullness! Likeness to Christ! Fullness of communion with Him! Abundance of the Spirit of God—being filled with all the fullness of God! An excess of joy! A perpetual influx of delight! Perfection of holiness! No stain nor thought of sin! Perfect submission to the divine will! A delight and acquiescence in and conformity to that will! Absorption as it were into God—the creature still the creature— but filled with the Creator to the brim! And more—serenity caused by a sense of safety; continuance of heavenly service; an intense satisfaction in serving God day and night; bliss in the society of perfect spirits and glorified angels; delight in the retrospect of the past; delight in the enjoyment of the present, and in the prospect of the future; something always new, and forevermore



the same; a delightful variety of satisfaction, and a heavenly sameness of delight; clear knowledge; absence of all clouds; ripeness of understanding; excellence of judgment; And, above all, an intense vigor of heart, and the whole of that heart set upon Him whom our eye shall see to be altogether lovely! I have looked at the crests of a few of the waves as I see them breaking over the sea of immortality.

I have tried to give you the names of a few of the peaks of the long alpine range of glory. But, ah, what are *my* words, and what are *my* thoughts? “Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard the things which God has prepared for them who love Him.” Our only satisfaction in thinking of it is that, “He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” May His Spirit dwell in you, and give you foretastes of the rest which remains—a preview of the eternal banquet where Christ will drink the new wine with us in His heavenly Father’s kingdom.

### III. Briefly, on the last point—**THE BOND OF INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY.**

“Whom He justified, them He glorified.” Let me show you why it must be—in the first place, *a justified person has in him the bud of glory*. What is glory? It is a state of perfect peace—“Therefore, being justified, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” What is glory? It is a state of rest—“We, which have believed, do enter into rest.” What is glory? It is a state of safety. When sin is pardoned, I am secure. I am safe—safe now, through being justified. What is heaven? It is a place of nearness to God; but He has made us near by the blood of His Son having justified us. What is heaven? It is communion with Christ—but, beloved, we have already boldness and access with boldness unto our Lord Jesus, seeing He has made us accepted in Himself. If you will but look carefully into justification you may see heaven hidden within it. They tell us that inside the acorn there is the whole oak with all

its branches and roots. And, certainly, within justification, there is heaven with all its light, and life, and love, and joy, and perpetual serenity and security. If you are justified, my dear brethren, you are already in a sense glorified. You notice how the text puts it. It does not say, “Whom He justified, them He *will* glorify,” but, “them He *also* glorified,” as if the thing came at the same time. Certainly it does in *embryo*, in the germ, in the *essence* of the thing. He that is justified, is, in a certain sense, glorified, for, “He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Even this day, the life that we live is, “not I that live, but Christ who lives in me.” Heaven is begun, glory is begun below.

Note again, *justification is a claim to glorification*. I speak with great reverence here, and caution, I hope; but it does not strike me that it could be consistent with the justice of God to deny eternal glory to a justified person. Certainly, justification has its rights. I am now speaking forensically, using forensic or legal terms. Justification is a legal term, signifying that the person is right in the eyes of the law. Now, he, who is right in the eyes of the law, has a claim to the protection and smile of the law; and if I have a righteousness to which a promise is appended, I have a right to the promise appended to the righteousness which I possess. The promise is, “He that does these things, shall live by them,” and I claim to live by them; I claim to live by virtue of what Christ has done for me. I come before God with His Son’s righteousness in my hands, and I claim as a matter of justice to His own dear Son, that He should give to me what His Son has merited, because the merits of His dear Son have been by Him willed over in His dying breath to me! Oh, Christian, God cannot condemn you unless He should cease to be just. He will not, for He cannot cease to be gracious.

Justification *would be but a very sorry gift of God if it did not involve glory*. Oh, to be justified and then cast into hell? Brethren,

can you suppose such a thing? If you can so pervert your imaginations, and make your judgments play the acrobat as to conceive a justified soul damned, then I ask you what greater curse could the infernal fiend himself confer upon a mortal than this so-called justification? A spirit pronounced just, and then sent down to hell, accursed of God, accursed by the same lips that justified it? Blasphemous thought! To lie in those flames, and to remember that I once had the righteousness of Christ, that I once was washed in His precious blood—oh, impossible! It shall not, must not, cannot be while the Deity is immutable, and while the strong hand of God will not allow the righteousness of Christ thus to be covered with disgrace! He did not begin to build, and then fail to finish. “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Where a man has done the greater, he does not fail to do the less. Now, it is a greater thing to justify a man than it is to glorify him. I mean this—that justification cost the Savior’s life, and the Savior’s death—but to glorify a man who is already justified costs God nothing. The expense is already laid out in the justification of the soul; and to take a man to heaven is only to take him to a prepared place, for which he is himself prepared. Shall He do the greater, and then neglect the less? “He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?”

The only question is, am I justified? I would say in closing, do not let that be a question, dear hearer. But look to Him who freely justifies every believing soul, and trust yourself now in His hands. May the Spirit of God bring you graciously to do it, and you shall find it true, “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

## **628 A GLORIOUS CHURCH – EPH. 5:25-27**

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### **A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 7th, 1865,**

**by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” — Ephesians 5:25-27**

WHAT A GOLDEN EXAMPLE Christ gives to His disciples! There are few masters who could venture to say, “If you would practice my teaching, imitate my life.” But the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, and therefore He can point to Himself as the paragon of holiness, as well as the teacher of it. The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace which was in Christ Jesus. Even as a husband, which is a relationship that the Christian sustains in common with the rest of men, he is to look upon Christ Jesus as being set before him as the picture, and he is to paint according to that copy. Christ Himself being the Bridegroom of the church, the true Christian is to seek to be such a husband as Christ was to His spouse. I fear, brothers that we often stop short of the Master’s example— that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are therefore far from being wise. We

think if we avoid the egregious faults of some, and can attain to the moderate virtues of others, we have done well. Let it be so no longer. He would never excel in statuary who should take the works of some mere amateur to be his copy. No; the sculptor knows that he cannot rival Praxiteles or Phidias, and yet he takes some Greek torso or bust from the antique to be his model—he must have perfection there, even if there is none in his own workmanship. The painter would never attain to eminence if he went to an exhibition and devoted himself to the study of some work of moderate worth, and said, “I will attempt to reach this, and there I will stop contented.” No, he goes to the galleries of the great masters, and though his timid pencil may not dare to hope that he shall strike out thoughts so clearly and make life stand out upon the canvas as they have done, yet he seeks to drink in their inspiration, hoping that he may rise to some proud eminence in art by imitating them. Let the Christian, then, aspire to be like his Lord who is the Author and Finisher of his faith; and let him, as he runs the heavenly race, look to Jesus, and make “the Apostle and High Priest of his profession” his continual study, and aim to be changed into His image from glory unto glory.

You must be struck in reading the passage before us, on what high ground the apostle takes the Christian. It is possible that some husbands might say, “How can I love such a wife as I have?” It might be a supposable case that some Christian was unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, and found himself forever bound with a fetter, to one possessed of a morose disposition, or an obstinate temper, or a bitter spirit. He might therefore say, “Surely I am excused from loving in such a case as this! It cannot be expected that I should love that which is in itself so unlovely.” But mark, beloved, the wisdom of the apostle. He silences that excuse, which may possibly have occurred to his mind while writing the passage, by taking

the example of the Savior, who loved, not because there was loveliness in His Church, but in order to *make* her lovely. You perceive “He loved His Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” He did not admire her because there was no spot in her; He did not choose her because she had no wrinkles; but He fixed His affections where there were many spots and wrinkles—where everything was deformity. He still set His heart, and would not withdraw, till He had loved the spots away, and loved every wrinkle out of her who was the object of His choice. And now He seems to say to every Christian man, however unhappily he may have fared—“If perhaps, in the lot of providence, you have been yoked to one who deserves but little of your affection, yet if you cannot love because of esteem, love because of pity; if you cannot love because of present merit, then love because of future hope, for possibly, even there, in that bad soil, some sweet flower may grow. Be not weary of holy tillage, and of heavenly plowing and sowing, because at the last, there may spring up some fair harvest that shall make your soul glad.” He loved His Church, and gave Himself for her that He might present her to Himself a glorious church. I do not intend, however, this morning, to enter into the duty of husbands; that is not the reason for which I selected the text, but to set forth the love of Jesus towards His people.

And first, let us consider *the object of the Savior’s love*. “He loved the church.” Then let us *observe the work which love has carried on in pursuance of its gracious design*. “He gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the word.” Then, thirdly, let us look at *the beloved object when the design is accomplished*—“without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” And then, let us pause awhile to *behold this beloved object, presented by our Lord to Himself in the day of His triumphant espousals*.

I. First, then, may the Spirit of God help us, while we look at **THE CHOSEN CHURCH, THE OBJECT OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE.**

Some of our brethren are very fond of what is called the general or universal view of God's benevolence. I trust we are not afraid to deal with that whenever we come across it in Holy Scripture. We believe that, "God is good to all, and that His tender mercies are over all His works." We believe Him to have the love of benevolence towards all His creatures, and we can preach without bated breath upon such a text as this—"He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But some of these brethren are very much afraid of the peculiar and special sign of the Savior's love, and they seem to shrink from a text which has anything particular and discriminating in it; and they shake it off from their hand into the fire, as Paul did the viper of old. Now we thank God we have learned to love the distinguishing doctrines of grace, and that predestination and discrimination are not hard words for us to pronounce now, and neither do they grate upon our ears; but we love to read this text, and put the emphasis upon the accusative case. Christ loved the *church* and gave Himself for *it*. We perceive that Christ did not love the *world* in the sense in which the term "loved" is here meant. We see here that Christ gave Himself not for the *world*, but for *it*, that is the church. In the sense in which He is said here to give Himself, He did so for none except His chosen people, the church—His one, special and particular object of affection. It is not thus that Christ has loved universal creatureship—and all mankind alike without exception or difference—but He loved the church, and gave Himself for *it*.

Now what is this church which Jesus Christ loved, if it is not the entire company of the elect? As many as the Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world, whose

names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the stars began to shine—as many as were taken by Him to be the sheep of His pasture, the jewels of His crown, the children of His love, the subjects of His kingdom, the members of His body, each one of them being particularly known to Him, and chosen in Him before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds—so many compose the church of Christ which was the object of His redeeming love.

We have to search for these chosen ones in what is called the church visible. We know that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, and that the visible church is not identical with that church which Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself. There is a church *invisible*, and this is the center, and life of the church visible! What the wheat is to the chaff and heap upon the threshing floor, such are these living Christians among the mass of professors in the world. There is a distinction which we cannot see, which it is not for us to try and make manifest, lest, in endeavoring to root up the tares, we root up the wheat also. There is an unseen church which becomes visible in heaven, which will be apparent and manifest at the coming of the Son of man. This it is which Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself.

Now observe what this church was *by nature*, for that is the subject of our discourse just now upon this first head. The church which Christ loved was in her origin as sinful as the rest of the human race. Have the damned in hell fallen through Adam's transgression? So had the saved in Glory once. The sin which was imputed to lost spirits was equally and with as fatal consequences imputed to them, and had it not been for the incoming of the covenant Head, the Second Adam, they had forever suffered with the rest. They, too, were alike depraved in nature. Is the heart deceitful above all things in the unregenerate? So it is in the elect before regeneration. Was the



will perverse? Was the understanding darkened? Was the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint, in the case of those who continued in sin? It was just the same, at first, with those who have been, by sovereign grace, taken into the heart of Christ. “We were,” says the apostle, “by nature the children of wrath even as others.” Remember that between the brightest saint in heaven, and the blackest sinner in hell, there is no difference except that which *Christ* has made. Had those glorified ones been left to continue in their natural state, they would have sinned as foully, and as constantly as the worst of sinners have done. To begin with, there is no difference between the election and the non-election. They are all alike fallen; “they are all gone out of the way—they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.”

No, more, this church of Christ is made up of persons who are *actually defiled* by their own transgressions. Are you and I members of that church? Ah, then we are compelled to confess that in us by nature, dwelt all manner of concupiscence, vileness, and an evil heart of unbelief, always prone to depart from the living God, and to rebel against the Most High. And what have we done since? Or rather, what have we *not* done?—

“We wandered each a different way,  
But all the downward road.”

We did not all fall into the same vices, but still when the black catalog of sin is read, we have to weep over it, and to say, “Such were some of us.” And why we should be made a part of Christ’s Church is a question that never can be answered except with this one reply, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Do the wicked sink to hell, with their sins like millstones about their necks? We would have sunk there, too, and as rapidly, and as fatally, unless eternal love had said,

“Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.” Look at Christ’s Church as you see her visibly in the world, and I ask you, brethren, though she has much about her that is admirable, whether there is not much that might cause her Lord to cast her away? Even in her regenerate state, she speaks truly when she says, “She is black as the tents of Kedar.” Mark the hypocrites who come into the Christian church and mar her purity. Observe the formalists that crowd her courts—that sit as God’s people sit, and sing as God’s people sing—but have hearts full of rottenness and villainy! Observe even the true saints—how unbelieving, how often carnally-minded, how childish—how ready to murmur against God! How few of them are fathers in Israel. When they ought to be teachers, they have need to be instructed in the first elements of the faith. What heresies come into the church, and how many unstable minds are carried away with them. What divisions there are! How one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” and a third, “I am of Christ.” What envy there is, what backbiting of those who are eminent for usefulness. What suspicions against those who are a little more zealous than their fellows! My brethren, what a lack of affection we can see in the church of Christ; how little brotherly kindness, how little sympathy!

On the other hand, how much of pride is discovered—how much *caste* creeps in and prevails even among those who profess to be brethren! How we find some claiming to be lords in God’s heritage, and taking to themselves names and titles to which they have no right, seeing that, “One is our Master,” and we are not to be called, “Rabbi,” among men. When I look at the church even with a blinded eye, having no power to see her as God’s omniscient eyes must see, yet is she covered with spots! Well may she wear her veil; and say, “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” O

church of God, how is it that Jesus Christ could love you, for even in your church capacity, and church estate, there is so much that could make Him say, “You are reprobate silver; you shall be cast into the fire.” Lo, how much there is that must make Him say of you, “Salt is good, but this salt has lost its savor, and how shall it be seasoned? It is therefore good for nothing but to be trod under foot of men.”

And yet you see, dear friends, it is written that Christ loved His Church, and gave Himself for her. I think I see it—a piece of untilled ground—neither hedged, nor walled, nor covered with vines, nor redolent with the perfume of sweet flowers, but it is a spot in the wilderness, filled with thorns and thistles; her hedges are broken down; the stones of her walls are scattered; the wild boar out of the woods, waste her; all kinds of unclean creatures lurk among her weeds and brambles. Oh, how is it, Lord of glory, that You could buy, at the price of Your heart's blood, such a waste piece of ground as that? What could You see in that garden, that You should determine to make it the fairest spot of all the earth, and that it should yield You the richest of all fruit?

I think, again, I see the church of God, not as a fair maid decorated for her marriage day with jewels, and carrying herself right gloriously both in her person and her apparel; but I see her as a helpless child, neglected by her parents, cast out, unwashed, unclothed, left uncared for, and covered with her filth and blood. No eyes pity her; no arms come to bring her salvation. But the eyes of the Lord Jesus look upon that infant, and straightway love beams forth from those eyes, and speaks from those lips, and acts through those hands. He says, “Live!” And the helpless infant is cared for—she is nurtured—she is decked with dainty apparel; she is fed and clothed, and sustained, and made lovely through the loveliness of Him who

chose her. Thus it is that strong love moved the grace of God, and the church found that Christ gave Himself for her.

I must not, however, leave this point without reminding you of what kind of love it is which Jesus Christ gives to His Church—you perceive it is the love of a husband. Now the love of a husband is *special*. Those gentlemen who think that Christ did not love the church more than He loved the rest of the world, must have a very strange idea of how a husband ought to love his wife, for it says, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.” And surely a husband ought to love his wife more than he loves other people! Therefore Christ cherishes for the church a special, particular affection, which is set upon *her* rather than upon the rest of mankind. The Lord has set His Church as much above the rest of the world as He has fixed His own throne above the kings and princes of this lower earth, and the day shall come when she, “fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” shall be recognized as being the favorite of heaven, the peculiar treasure of Christ—His regalia, the crown of His head, the bracelet of His arm, the breastplate of His heart, the very center and core of His own love. Let us not quibble at this truth of God, for it is exceedingly precious. Let us seek the honey out of it, and believe that Christ loves the church with a special love.

Again, a husband loves his wife with a *constant* love, and so does Christ His Church. He will not cast her away tomorrow having loved her today. He does not vary in His affection; He may change in His *display* of affection, but the affection itself is still the same. A husband loves his wife with an *enduring* love; it will never die out—he says, “Till death us do part will I cherish you,” but Christ will not even let death part His love to His people. “Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A husband loves his wife with a *heartly* love, with a love that is true and intense. It is not mere lip

service; he does not merely speak, but he acts; he is ready to provide for her needs; he will defend her character; he will vindicate her honor, because his heart is set upon her. It is not merely with the eyes that he delights, now and then, to glance upon her, but his soul has her continually in his remembrance; she has a mansion in his heart, from where she can never be cast away; she has become a portion of himself—she is a member of his body—she is part of his flesh and of his bones. And so is the church to Christ forever, an eternal spouse. He says—

“Forget you, I will not, I cannot; your name  
Engraved on My heart does forever remain;  
The palms of My hands while I look on, I see  
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.”

Now let us leave this point, only reminding you, again, that this church is only the church of Christ because He has made her so. She had no right or title to His affection; He loved her because He *chose* to do so, and having once loved her, He never will divorce her—she shall be His, world without end.

**II.** And now, I shall want your patience a few minutes on the second point, and that is **THE WORK WHICH LOVE SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH IN ITS GRACIOUS DESIGNS.**

Since the church is not fit for Christ by nature, He resolved to make her so by divine grace. He could not be in communion with sin. Therefore it must be purged away. Perfect holiness was absolutely necessary in one who was to be the bride of Christ. He purposes to work that in her, and to make her qualified to be His spouse eternally. The great means by which He attempts to do this, is, “He gave Himself for her.”

Beloved, I wish I had the power of speech this morning as one sometimes has it, or rather, I wish that another had to

handle such a weighty theme as this—for how can I set forth to you the preciousness of this gift? He gave Himself for His Church. Had He given His crown and royalty, and come down to earth for a while, that were mercy. Had He given up, for a time, the happiness and pleasure of His Father’s house, this was something—and this He did. But it was not enough. He would not merely leave His glory, and part with His crown—He must give Himself. Here He is on earth, born of the virgin; a helpless Infant, He slumbers at her breast. Throughout His life, foxes had holes, and birds of the air nests, but, “He had not where to lay His head.” He has given you much in this. “He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” The crown of thorns is on His brow, the lash of the scourge is on His back, the spear is at His chest, the nails are in His hands and feet. He has given you much, but now He is about to give you all He has. He is stripped naked to His shame; He gives His last garment that He may cover the nakedness of man, but when He cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” when having drank the last drop of the bitter cup of woe, He bows His head and says, “It is finished!” and He gives up the ghost—He has given you all that He can give—for He has given you Himself. He gives you His Godhead; that comes on earth, but is veiled in clay; He gives you His entire Manhood, for His body is given to the scourge and tomb, and His soul to agony and death—He gives Himself.

Perhaps you will say, “But how does His giving Himself tend to cleanse His Church?” You know, beloved, how the precious blood of His heart takes away sin; how the righteousness of His life covers His Church, and makes her beautiful in the sight of God; you know how the water which flowed with the blood purifies and sanctifies His people, but, perhaps you will never realize better how Christ gives Himself to you than you do at the sacramental table. There in type and

symbol you see in that bread, His broken body; you see set forth in shadow in that wine, His blood. And what do you do with that bread? Do you look at it? Yes, with tears in your eyes. What do you do with the cup? Do you regard it? Yes, with loving eyes. But this is not all. “Take, eat!” says the Savior. “Drink, drink all of it,” He says. And as you eat and drink, you are thereby reminded of the great truth of God that He has given you His flesh to eat, and His blood to drink—and that these, like some healing medicine, will purge you of all diseases, cleanse you of every lingering cancer, go through and through the secret parts of your soul, and expel with their sanctifying influence the very roots and seeds of corruption, and make you perfect in every good work to do His will. I admit that you may not feel this at present, but you have that within you in having received Christ which will be the death of all sin. He has given Himself to dwell in you, to kill every lust, to slay every corruption, to expel the Canaanites out of the Canaan of your heart till King David shall reign in Jerusalem, and the Jebusite shall be put away forever. Beloved, this is the way in which He sanctifies and cleanses His Church—by giving Himself for her—first upon the tree, and afterwards in the church, by the work of the Holy Spirit, as a quickening and cleansing power, dwelling there forevermore.

When the text says, “He gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it,” is there not allusion here to the double cure of sin? Here is Christ sanctifying by the Spirit, that is to say, taking away the propensity to sin—killing the power of sin in us—helping us to reign over our corruptions that we may in heart and life be pure, even as our Father which is in heaven is pure. And as to the cleansing, may not that allude to justification and pardon? Of that we spoke particularly last Sunday to our own joy if not to yours [see Sermon #627]. We are complete in Him; We are perfect in Christ Jesus, and the

design of Christ is that sanctification shall be as perfect as justification—that the power of sin shall be as thoroughly slain as the guilt of it—that altogether sin shall cease to be in the Christian.

But what is the outward instrumentality which Christ uses? The text says, “With the washing of water by the word.” We Baptists are generally thought to lay great stress upon baptism. There can be no greater mistake made than to suppose that we exaggerate its importance! I sometimes think we do not value it enough. Those who practice infant baptism might be much more fairly charged with exaggerating the importance of baptism, than those of us who scrupulously require a profession of faith from all persons, before we think of baptizing them into the name of the Lord. I do not believe that baptism is intended here, nor even referred to. I know that the most of commentators say it is. I do not think it. It strikes me that one word explains the whole. Christ sanctifies and cleanses us by the washing of water, but what sort of water? By the Word; the water which washes away sin, which cleanses and purifies the soul is the Word. The Word of God has a cleansing influence. It comes and convicts the man of sin. It makes him see his impurity so as to hate it. When applied with power by the Holy Spirit, it works repentance; it leads the man to weep and bewail himself before God. That same word leads to faith in Christ Jesus, and faith works by love, and purifies the soul. The word is preached, the word is believed; and as soon as ever that word is believed, it begins to act like water in the heart of man. You cannot receive the gospel, and yet be as filthy as you were before. My brethren, if you really welcome the truth of God, those grosser sins will be washed away at once. Next, as you discover them, your besetting sins will be cleansed away, and constantly—as you understand the word better, believe it more firmly, and feel its effect more powerfully—you will by it,



as by water, be washed and cleansed from all indwelling sin, till you are sanctified and cleansed and made fit to enter into heaven. This one thing let me say solemnly— I go not into this world to preach the efficacy of baptismal water in cleansing souls from sin. Let those who care to do it, and think it their office, magnify their office exceedingly. Let those who think that sacraments have necessarily efficacy in them, stand out and boldly declare it; but, as for us, we believe that the water which cleanses is none other than the Word of God, which is preached by man, and applied by the Holy Spirit. We rest upon the uplifted cross of Christ, upon the doctrine of His atonement, on the great truth of His abiding presence in the church of God, and ever pray, “Sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth.”

And, mark you; the world has had a fair trial of both plans. Throughout the dark ages, the world tried the efficacy of baptisms and sacraments—century after century, Popery and priest-craft gutted the world with the idea that baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper were a prescription for cleansing away sin. What was the result? Were not the cities filled with harlots? Were not the dungeons crowded with prisoners? Had not the earth become an Aceldama, and was not the whole land, like Sodom, reeking with filth? Then came Luther and Calvin, and though these men held not all the truth of God in its fullness, yet, at least they held “the washing of water by the word,” and Luther, and Zwingli, and Calvin declared, “The world's great purgative is faith in Jesus Christ, not sacraments. The priesthood lies with Christ, and not with men. Priest-craft is to be put away. Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith comes by hearing and that hearing by the preaching of the word.” And what happened? Why, the world woke as from a long slumber! She found herself in chains—she snapped the chains as Samson snapped the green

withes. Progress came—knowledge, light, truth—and if the world is not holy, yet what strides has she made since the day when Tetzels “Indulgence for Sin” defiled the world through and through to its very center with blasphemy! We have but to keep on using this washing of water by the continual preaching of the word, and the day shall come when our poor planet shall be cleansed from blood and filth, and shall come out from the mists in which she is now enveloped, and shine like her sister stars, bright in the light of her God! And the only sounds that shall be heard from her shall be songs of joy and peace, because the Lord God omnipotent reigns. This, then, is Christ’s way of cleansing and sanctifying His Church—by the washing of water, that is to say, by the Word of God.

**III.** And now let us pass on, again troubling your patience, to the third point—**THE LOVED ONE AS SHE IS PERFECTED.**

One is inclined to draw a veil over the face of beauty which never can be painted. She is to be a *glorious* church. We love our own highly-favored church. I am sure there is not a member of it—at least I do not know one—who does not feel his heart leap every time he thinks of this church which God has so prospered, and blessed, and honored. For all that, we are nothing but a militant church, and a very imperfect one—a church that has cause to mourn and humble herself before God for many sins. And I, as pastor, looking upon you all, cannot help, while I bless God for all I see that is excellent, bowing my own head in the dust, because of the sins of a people favored with the gospel, who, nevertheless, have much to confess before God. We are not a *glorious* church. You can cast your eyes upon such churches as the Moravians who gave themselves up, men and women, to Christ’s cause, and scattered themselves all over the world, preaching the gospel. Greenland was not too cold, the Sahara was not too hot—they sacrificed everything for Christ—but yet the Moravian Church,

with all its excellence, has much of which it may well repent. It is not a glorious church. You may look where you like, and you shall see that the dust of travel is still upon the wilderness church. She has the presence of God—she has her Shekinah—but alas, she is troubled within by a mixed multitude. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, sometimes vex her. Her Master sometimes has to send her fiery serpents, and she still needs to keep the bronze serpent lifted up every day; for even in her ranks, there are some that still need to look and live.

We have no glorious church on earth, nor do I think we can get much idea of what a glorious church is. I tried yesterday, last Sunday, rather, (and all the days since then seem to have gone so rapidly that I thought of it yesterday). I tried last Sunday to show what a glorious *person* was. But what must a glorious *church* be? There is one lamp. Well, that is very bright, very pleasing; you like to have it in your room—but think of all London illuminated to the very top of the cross of St. Paul's—and what an idea you then have of brightness. Now, one glorified Christian is a lamp. Think then, of all heaven with its domes of glory lit up with ten thousands times ten thousands companies of blood-bought spirits, whom Jesus Christ has taken up—a *glorious church*! One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman's garden, acres in size, and there are beds of flowers—blue, and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria, and the geranium and many others, all in order and in ranks. Oh, how glorious is this! Those undulating lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept—all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! A garden! Who can tell how sweet this is? So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious church is Christ's garden. A drop of water may be very precious to a thirsty tongue, but a river full of it! Children are pleased, when for the first time in

their lives they sail across some little lake, but how surprised they are when they come to the deep and rolling sea, which seems without shore or bottom! Well, so pleased am I at the very thought of the glorious church. As yet I have never seen anything but one little lake—this church—the church of God in England, the church of God in the world—what is it, after all, but “a drop in a bucket”? But the *glorious* church—the whole of the people of God gathered together in one, all perfectly free from sin, all made like unto Christ, and all bright with the glory which excels even that which Moses and Elijah had, when they were with Christ in the holy mountain, or such as Moses had when he came down from the top of Horeb, when he had been 40 days with God—a *glorious* church, a mighty company of *glorified beings*!

But do observe what is said of her. She is to be, “Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” “Without spot”—that is much; but, you see, spots can be taken off. The face is washed, and the spot comes out; the garment is thoroughly cleansed, and there are some chemicals and acids applied, and the spots can be removed. Though, truly, some of us have scarlet spots of a crimson-like dye, yet the blood of Jesus is a wonderful detergent, and it can get out spots of any color. Though we may have been lying in the lye-tub of sin even for 70 years, yet Christ will get all the spots out of us if we are a part of His Church. Though His Church is double dyed, yet Christ will make her white as snow. But, that is not the wonder of the text; the marvel is, “without spot or *wrinkle*.” You may get a spot out of your face, but you cannot smooth out a wrinkle! You may make what efforts you please, but you cannot get rid of your wrinkles; you who are getting old, if time has come and driven his plow across your brow, why, the furrows will remain there—they will not come out. Yes, but the church of Christ is to be without wrinkle as well as without spot! How will He get the wrinkles

out? There is no chemical that I know of that can get rid of them. But Jesus Christ has a sacred art, having in Himself, by the washing of water, even the word, the power to get wrinkles out! Lightfoot says there is an allusion here to the carefulness of the Jew in his ablutions. The Jew not only washes very carefully when he is purifying himself for worship, but lest any dust or impurity should remain in any crack of the skin, or in any wrinkle, he seeks by washing again and again with the severest care, to get out the least filth that would be in the wrinkle. Very good, Dr. Lightfoot, but the Jew cannot wash wrinkles out; he can wash away the dirt, but he cannot get rid of the wrinkle. But Christ can banish away both. Another good writer says, that perhaps there is an allusion here to the fuller's trade. The fuller gets out the spots first, and then as the cloth may have been so folded up that there are creases and wrinkles in it, he uses different stretching and millings, till at last he manages to get out the creases and wrinkles from the cloth as well as the spot. I do not know whether there is an allusion to that, but this I know—there shall not be a spot of sin on any of God's people, nor yet a wrinkle of infirmity. They shall lose the effect of old age and weakness in their bodies, and they shall lose the defects and infirmities in their souls. The outward spot shall be removed, and the inward deformity, which was like a wrinkle ingrained into their very nature, shall also be taken away. But do observe the next word. The Holy Spirit seems to exhaust language to describe this purity. He says, "Without spot, or wrinkle, or *any such thing!*" She shall have nothing *like* a spot, nothing that can be *construed* as a wrinkle—she shall be fair, and the world shall be compelled to acknowledge that she is. The eyes of God shall look upon her; and though He sees in darkness, and discovers the hidden things of night, even He shall discern neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing in any one single part of the body or the soul, of any one of the

members of the mystical body of Christ. Oh what perfection, beloved, is this! I cannot speak of it, but I can delight in thinking of it. I was trying to think last night what I should be like when I was freed from my spots and wrinkles. Ah, you can all see them now—I wonder you put up with them sometimes! But what shall I be, when I have parted with them forever? And I *shall* get rid of them. Death is stamped on every infirmity—the Lord has put the poison into the heart of my inbred sins, and bless His name for it. But what will you and I be like when we are perfect? No hasty temper, no sloth, no wrong thoughts, no cold hearts, no problems in prayer, no sluggishness in praise. Oh, brethren, there will be some of you so different, we shall scarcely know you! When some brethren die, I believe they will go to heaven, but they will be strangely altered by the time they get there. They are good people, but they have such crotchety ways, such strange sense of humor, such hot tempers, that surely, we shall have to be very wise people to know them in heaven! We shall need to be informed who they are, they will be so greatly changed; but this will be the happy state of all—whether altered much or little—we shall be, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

I must not dwell longer, though the theme invites it. Hypocrisies, heresies, declensions, divisions— all these will be put away from the church. Infirmity, doubt, sin, fear of every kind, will be put away from every believer, and we shall be presented blameless, holy, and unreprouable in the sight of God.

#### **IV. And lastly, THE LOVED ONE IS TO BE PRESENTED.**

It is said, He is “to present her to Himself.” Every day Christ presents His people to His Father in His intercession. The Holy Spirit presents poor sinners every day in conversion to Christ, but there is to be a day, when Christ will present His glorious church “to Himself.” When He shall come, then, shall

be the wedding day. There shall be heard the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" Then the virgins with their lamps trimmed shall go forth to meet Him, and His Church shall enter into the supper, to sit down and sup with Him, and He with her. Today the church is like Esther bathing herself in spices, making herself ready for Ahasuerus, her lord and master; today we are engaged, at the coming we shall be married. We are now waiting impatiently for Him, then, we shall be in His embrace. Today we wear not the crown, today we wave not the palm, but tomorrow when He comes, we shall be crowned with Him and triumph with Him. Let us long for His appearing. Let this bright hope sustain you in the dreary months of waiting, and the weary hours of fighting, "He comes! He comes!" And when He comes, He will be glorified in all His saints, and admired in those who have believed on Him.

I would to God we were all members of His Church. There is only one token of membership which is infallible, and that is, saving faith in Christ. If you believe in Jesus, you shall be without spot or wrinkle; but if you believe not, you are not of His Church, and neither shall you be a partaker of His cleansing power nor of His glorious advent.

God give you a new heart and a right spirit, and wash you with water this day by the word, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington  
*On Behalf of the Baptist Irish Society*

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into your hands Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. And you shall compass the city, all you men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shall you do six days.” —  
Joshua 6:2-3

I SEE MANY ministering brothers here. I think I shall follow the example of Martin Luther who observes that he frequently saw in the church at Wittenberg sundry learned doctors, and there usually sat Dr. Justus Jonas and others, of whom he said were infinitely greater and more wise than himself. “But,” said Martin, “I do not, therefore, alter my style of preaching—I do not preach to them, but I preach to those peasants who come in from the country, and to the citizens of Wittenberg, for then I am quite certain that if they can understand me, Dr. Justus Jonas and the learned divines can understand me too, if they like.” I shall, moreover, adopt what is said to have been Mr. Wesley’s exhortation to his preachers, namely, aim low. “There is more likelihood,” he says, “of hitting the men than when you fire high.” I may also frankly confess I am reduced to that precept by necessity since I have no capabilities of firing high, and must therefore shoot low. We shall take our text now, and try, if we can, to get something out of it which may be



applicable to the present position of our Society, and see if we cannot draw some words and thoughts from it, which may strengthen, encourage, and nerve us for future action in this good work of God.

The Irish Society has to do with one of the citadels of Romanism, and it strikes me that there is a very evident parallel between our efforts and the work which Israel had to do against this city of Jericho. Jericho was a *strongly defended city* and *shut up*, so that none went in or came out. And Romanism seems to have accomplished this admirably. It shuts up its disciples so that they are scarcely accessible, and converts from it are few and far between. None, I was about to say, go in—very few, indeed, from us—and there are very few who ever come out again. Jericho was the *frontier* city. That being captured, the conquest of the rest of Canaan would be comparatively easy. And Popery is very much the frontier city, the Jericho of our warfare—it stands in the way of the evangelization of the world; it is the great impediment to the spread of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jericho fall and Canaan may weep and howl, for her day has come. And let Rome be subdued—let Romanism be conquered and the world shall soon be at the feet of that Jesus whom it once despised. We are attacking, I think, in the Irish Society, a Jericho indeed, and we have been long at it; but it has been a very weary task, and the brothers have sometimes been apt to cry, “Let it be given up.” I will speak of this on the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth—perhaps on the sixth day of the week, to cry to these brethren—“Courage, go on still with your rams’ horns, bear your testimony, and carry the ark of the Lord round about this city, for the Lord has delivered it unto your hands; only be obedient and courageous, and abide His time, for your victory is absolutely sure.”

I shall divide what I may have to say this evening into these three parts. It strikes me that the narrative before us teaches us that God would have His people *work*, and *wait*, and *win*. And this is what we have to do today as they had of old.

**I. First of all, God would have His people **WORK**.**

A little upon that. We preach the doctrines of grace, and the doctrines of grace are always the best soil in which to grow good works. We daily insist upon it that works do not make a man live, but we equally insist upon it that spiritual life continually manifests itself by holy deeds. The soldiers of God's army, after they had crossed the Jordan, were not to lie still in luxurious ease till Jericho's walls should crumble down by slow degrees; and though God determined to send Jericho to sudden destruction, yet His people were not to sit still upon some neighboring knoll, and expect the catastrophe—they were to labor, and Jericho would fall as the result of their toil. Their work is to consist of a daily procession; they are to go in cavalcade round about the wall; the priests are to exercise their functions. The ark must be carried upon men's shoulders; the men of war are to be there to defend the ark, to clear the way, and to follow also in the rear, to guard it against any sudden attack or any eruption from the city. They are to march thus the whole of the six days—not one day without its parade—not one day without obedience to the great Captain of the host. So, brethren, must it be with us. We are to win the world for Christ; this is our high ambition, and it shall be in Christ's name our grand attainment. But it must be by work, by testimony-bearing, by the preaching of the gospel, by continual prayer, by encompassing the city, perpetually serving God, and walking in the path of obedience.

Let us look at this work a little in connection with this narrative. You will observe that the work to be done by Israel was *universal*. There was a place for each one to occupy. The

men of arms were to go round the city, and with them the priests were to march. Both the ecclesiastical and the military *castes* shall be represented here. They must neither of them sit still. It is an ill day for God's Church when we conceive that some few are to fight the Lord's battles, and that the rest of us may look on and criticize or applaud. You are, all of you, my brethren, called to serve God. You recognize this in your creed. You know yourselves to be priests, and you hate the lie which lifts some men into a priesthood, and puts the rest down as, "the laity," as though they were nothing better than stones. You feel that you are all called to bear the vessels of the Lord—that you are a "royal priesthood, a peculiar people," that you are all set apart for the service of God. But while this is our creed, I am afraid it is not our practice. How many take their seats in the pew, and when they have once made themselves comfortable, consider that their work is entirely wrapped up in listening to sermons or perhaps fumbling in their pockets for a solitary coin on collection occasions for the missionary society? It may be now and then—*now and then*—assisting in some enterprise of usefulness, but this only as an exception to the rule. We shall never see the church become strong and mighty till every single member of the church shall realize his responsibility. We must *all* encompass this city. Observe, when the Lord fed the multitude, He did not take *some* of the five loaves, or *one* of the fishes, but He took *all* the loaves, though they were barley, and both the fishes, though they were small; and He took care to break all, and to divide all among the people. Nothing of a stock-in-hand was kept in the larder, nothing was laid by, but all was used, and then, by the multiplying power of God, there was sufficient food for all. And so we must rummage the larder, we must bring out the barley cakes, we must bring forth the fishes—all must be devoted to the Master's cause; and in the use, ability will be

multiplied; in the exercise, divine grace will be increased, and we shall yet be sufficient for the world's needs.

It has been said, and I think a little calculation will show you that it is correct, that if God were to enable the Christians in this huge city of ours to feel their responsibility, and if every individual Christian were made the means of the conversion of one other—starting with 50,000 Christians in London, (and let us hope there are as many believers as that—for it is a very small proportion of the professing multitude)—then, considering that there are three million souls in London, six years would be sufficient for the conversion of the whole by the simple agency of each disciple bringing in one of the stray sheep. This does not seem as if it were an impossible thing. Only divine grace is needed from on high. We must plead with God to bring down the blessing; and when the blessing comes on each man's labor, there certainly is no hindrance in the matter of time, or in the matter of exertion—for, with God's blessing—the conversion of a soul is not a matter that requires us to relinquish business, or that compels us to give up all our time to it. Some five minutes have been, by divine grace, a sufficient length of time, and half-a-dozen words have proven enough. Courage, my brethren; vast as the work is, if we all go to it, with God's blessing, it will be speedily accomplished. Our police served us all with a notice the other day, when the snow was on the ground, that we were each one to sweep before our own doors. It was very right that the passenger should go along the footpath without being smothered with the mud and snow commingled. Now what an expense it would have been to clean the streets of London by any other process! It would be difficult for a contractor to undertake it by the year, since he would scarcely know how often he would be called to work. How could an army of men be kept ready to do the work which comes in so strange a fashion—sometimes but once in the year,

and sometimes 50 times; but each man sweeps before his own door, and then it is all done early in the morning, and you walk the streets in comfort! Oh that we could but feel that we are to sweep before our own door! Oh that every man would build the dilapidated wall of Jerusalem before his own house! And when this is done, then shall God send victory to His hosts; but I fear it will not be till then. God would have His people work universally.

But next, He would have them work in His own *appointed way*. They are not to go in a scramble—in a boyish race round Jericho; there must be the soldiers in their troops, the priests in their array, and then again, the men of war to bring up the rear. God would have His people work according to His revealed will. We must be very tender and jealous here. Whatever may be the opinions about the alteration of the constitution of our missions, I do trust that we shall, all of us, when we come together, recognize the authority of God, and feel that we can only expect to have His guidance, His help, His blessing, when we walk according to the path which He has marked for us. If I go upon a tour, I do not expect to see certain sights which have been guaranteed to me by my friend, unless I agree to follow the little chart which he has mapped out for me. I cannot expect to have that sublime view of the Alps, if I refuse to climb a certain spot and stand there and view the glacier and the snow peak glittering in the sun. And I cannot expect to have God's blessing in my ministry and in the Sunday school class unless I keep to, "It is written," and in all things have a tender conscience, and am jealous of myself lest I err. How much more, then, in this greater work in which the whole Church is engaged! My brethren, let us see to it that in all things we compass this city of Jericho according to the divine order, for only so may we expect to see her walls come crumbling down.

Then, again, remember they encompassed the city *daily*. So does God call His Church to *work daily*. It is very easy for us, in a moment of excitement, to accomplish a great work; and the most of Christian work now-a-days is, I fear, merely spasmodic. We build chapels by a series of fits, we pay off missionary society debts by stupendous efforts, and we relapse again into debt and difficulties. I am afraid that as a denomination, we are not fond of working too tryingly. We know the value of ourselves, of our time, and of our money, and we are not apt to wear ourselves out by any excessive exertion. We have never, I believe, at any period since the unhappy days of Munster, been accused of an excess of zeal; we are rather to be accused of quarreling about points on which we differ, than of excessive love of sticking to the practical business of fighting the devil, and winning the world to Christ. But we must come to this, for mark you, if we are to conquer the world, we must each of us have our daily work, and keep to it, as God shall give us grace. The wheel must revolve again, and again, and again—it is that perpetual motion of industry which produces wealth, and it must be the ceaseless energy of our zeal which shall produce spiritual conquest. We have sharpened our swords, and fleshed them well; the younger men among us have had a brush with the foe, and we are beginning to think that, like our sober sires, we may be quiet; but it must not be so—we must agitate for all the truth of God, for all the doctrines we hold dear, and for the peculiar truths of God we hold as a denomination. We must keep on fighting for Christ, and fighting for Christ every day. We must sleep in our armor. We must begin to feel that the sword cleaves to our hand, and cannot be separated from it. We must give ourselves so entirely to the work to which God has called us, that wherever we are, whatever we may be engaged in, men may take knowledge of us as to what is our work and calling. In this Irish Society, there must be no

standing still, no ceasing of the trumpet, no withdrawing of so much as a single ram's horn! The testimony must still be kept up, the witness-bearing must become more constant; we must preach, and teach, and pray, and work, and live, and if necessary, die daily until this Jericho is stormed.

Nor have we exhausted the metaphors with which our text supplies us, for surely we may add that God would have His people work *in faith*. We are told by Paul that, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." It seems to me, that was a grand spectacle when the first man went forward step by step, and all the rest followed, the priests too, all of them confident that they were doing the best thing to make Jericho's ramparts fall to the ground. "Why," the fool might have said, "you are doing *nothing*! You are not loosening a single stone!" And at the end of the fifth or sixth day, I suppose it was suggested by many, "What is the good of it all?" But at least the most of those, who encompassed the city, were men of faith—or else it could not have been said, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." "Yes," they seemed to say, "She will come down! She will come down! She stands like a rock, she has not moved, there is not a beam loosened, nor a cord broken—not a house in ruins, nor a tent that has fallen—not a single stone that has crumbled from her battlements, but she *shall* come down!" And on they went with steady tramp, and though they saw no corpses blocking up their pathway, though their arms were not red with blood, though they heard no shriek of those who flee, and could utter no shout of victory—yet they were as confident as they were when the walls actually began to rock, and the dust and smoke went up to heaven—and the shrieks of the slain made glad their ears. We must encompass this city in full faith. Brothers, is the preaching of the gospel a power? If you think it is not, never try it again. Is the gospel mighty to save? Will the gospel come out victorious? If you have any doubt, slink back to your

cowardly repose, and let the man whom God sends never doubt. If you have achieved no successes, if after 50 years your trumpet of jubilee was exceedingly small, if after 50 years it was something like a ram's horn that had not been bored, and could not make any noise at all, yet still go on; your time for shouting has not yet come, but your time for compassing the city is always present. Get on with it, get on with it, and God will not permit you to end till you have won the victory!

So let us notice once more under this head of work, they worked with *patience* and *courage*. God kept this people laboring in the presence of difficulty. They were compassing the city, taking their walks, but always with the formidable walls of Jericho close under their eyes. Surely they must have had these walls photographed on their eyes, and on their brains. "I shall know every stone in it," says one. "Six times I have been round, no, 12 times, and the walls have not begun to rock—12 times! Seven is a perfect number, but we have gone beyond it, and yet the walls do not stir." "Mark well her bulwarks, and count the towers on her." These men were practical surveyors of Jericho; they could well understand the strength of the battlements, how many feet long the huge stones were at the corners, and how near the stars the loftiest towers were raised. They had the difficulty, I say, always before them, yet they kept on in simple faith, going round the city. Sometimes we get into the habit of shutting our eyes to difficulty; that will not do—Faith is not a fool. Faith does not shut her eyes to difficulty and then run headlong against a brick wall—never. Faith sees the difficulty, surveys it all, and then she says, "By my God will I leap over a wall." And over the wall she goes! She never brings out the flaming accounts of, "signs of the times," in her favor; she does not sit down, and say that evidently public sentiment is changing; she does not reckon upon any undercurrents that may be at work, which she is told by Mistress Gossip, really are



doing great things, but she just looks at it, and does not mind how bad the thing is reported to be. If anybody can exaggerate the difficulty, faith is of the same noble mind as that famous warrior who, when told there were so many thousand soldiers against him, replied, “There are so many more to be killed.” Faith reckons—“So many more difficulties, so many more things to be overcome.” And even impossibilities she puts down as only so much burden to be cast upon Him, with whom nothing is impossible! She keeps Jericho’s walls before her. And I wish that we, dear friends, knew more than we do—the perfect hopelessness of our work of seeking to convert Ireland to the gospel—for there never was a task undertaken, I think, that had less hopefulness about it! I want you to be driven more and more to think, as far as the agency of man is concerned, that the thing is almost out of the category of the possible, and out of the category of the probable altogether! And when you can get to that point, and hear the voice, “Compass the city six days,” yet still have courage to go on, on, on—notwithstanding all the manifest difficulties—then, when God has taught you your nothingness, and brought you to feel that if victory is given, it is all His, and that divine omnipotence and sovereignty must wear the crown—then, I say, He will make the old rampart rock, and the harlot of the seven hills shall rue the day when Israel shouts, when her sons are slain, and God shall triumph right gloriously! God, however, would have His people work—that is the first point—we are agreed on that. Let us unite to carry it out.

“The sermon is not done” said one, when he came out of church—“It is all said, but it is not all done.” So let me close this head with saying that it is not *done*, it is only said. I have *said* that God would have His people work. Let us go and work. Let us begin tonight. If we have been lazy up to now—if there are any Issachars here like the strong ass crouching down between

two burdens—just get up, Sir Issachar, and carry your burden! If there is any brother here who has been saying, “God will have His own,” let him mind what he is doing, or God will never have *him*, for God’s own do not talk at that rate, and do not say that God’s purposes are to be an excuse for man’s indifference. Let him shake that off, for he cannot take such a plea as that before the judgment bar, he knows he cannot; therefore, do not let him try it here. Let us try and work well for God; you in your Sunday school classes, you in your preaching stations, you in your tract distributions, you here in England, you, my brethren, across the sea, and you in the Emerald Isle still compassing the city seven times.

**II.** We now come, in the second place, to consider that God would have His people **WAIT**.

The *delay* must have sorely tried the faith and patience of the Israelites. “Time flies,” and time is very precious, these Israelites must have thought, “Why make us wait? If we have to tarry a long while before the walls of Jericho, why then, what a time it will take to conquer all the interior; and if we begin with a long delay, our enemies may gather courage, and before we have made our entrenchments behind which we may shield ourselves, the host will be upon us, and we shall be cut to pieces.” It must have seemed to every merely thoughtful person in the camp of Israel, that it was imperative that the first city should be taken as speedily as possible, so that the people might be encouraged, and their enemies scattered; and it would give to those weary pilgrims some settled place to which they might retire with comfort, for they were, I suppose, still in their tents and longing for the time, when like the rest of the people of the land, they might dwell in their own houses. But they must keep quiet; and according to present appearances, they must remain so indefinitely. The people could not tell how long they were to tarry there. And just observe, my brethren, how very trying

it must have been to them to wait. I do not know so much about the priests, for I am afraid priests are apt to be very contented with doing nothing, but not so with soldiers! There are a great many brothers who seem to be perfectly satisfied to rest at ease, but men of war do not generally seem to be of that temperament.

When I was in the military prison at Dublin, I observed a form of punishment there. Men were carrying large shot. A man took up a large shot, and carried it to the end of the yard, and he afterwards had to pick that shot up and bring it back again. I said, "How is it that you do not let them take all the shot to that end, and pile them up there?" The officer said, "We used to do so, but it was no use, for when the fellows had piled them up, they felt they were doing something; but now we make them carry the shot from one end of the yard to the other, and then back again, and back again, and they feel they have to work hard and do nothing. That is always miserable work to a soldier." Many of our soldiers at Sebastopol made bitter complaints at not being led to battle. And you will often hear young military men say that they hate the inactivity of peace—they need to be doing something. Now these men of war were kept for six days marching round and round the city, and they must have felt themselves to have been doing very little all that week. That is what I feel with regard to this Irish Society, and there are many of us, too, who, if we speak plainly, must say that we think that we have done very little, sorry little; we remember two or three things that have been successes; and two or three things that have been a very long way from success. Sometimes we have complained that there have been asylums provided for brothers sent yonder, and we have wondered why such brothers were sent at all. We have said, "Well, if this do-nothing affair is to keep on much longer, we must get others who will do something; for at present we are in this position,

‘What is John doing?’ ‘Nothing.’ ‘What is Tom doing?’ ‘Helping John.’” We need to see something done, and therefore, it is hard to wait; but we must check ourselves. Our vehemence should urge us to use all proper means, though it should never be of that sort which would make us relax our efforts because we do not immediately achieve all the success which we desire. My brothers in Christ Jesus, though as men of war we would rather come to close quarters, and see more done, yet as men of God, we must keep to our posts of duty and learn how to wait.

Besides this, what rendered the waiting so very galling was, (what must have struck their reason, if it did not assail their faith), the utter *desperateness of the case*. How could they hope to win that city by simply going round and round? “Give me a good ladder,” says one, “a rope ladder, and a couple of good irons at the end of it! Just let me hear the clank upon the top stone, and I am your man to lead the ‘forlorn hope,’ and there are 50,000 of us to follow, and we will soon have Judah’s standard waving on the top, and make the sons of Jericho know what the sons of Abraham can do.” But no; they must just march around the place till they have compassed the city 12 times. And so, brethren, there are certain spirits apt to say, “Could not we do more by adopting these methods, and such other expedients?” See how certain of our brethren of another denomination feel that if they can but get a golden ladder—if they get the assistance of the *regium donum*—in this way, Jericho’s walls may be scaled; and there is the temptation to look about us, and ask for some assistance over and above the power which lies in the simple gospel—but we must not do it. Away with our methods and state-crafts, and policies, and suggestions of the crafty and cunning, and all the wisdom of the worldly! God forbid that we should glory but in the cross of Christ! With the simplicity of children, let us still believe that

our Father's means are the best; and though as soldiers, we cannot understand it, yet as children let us believe it, and keep on compassing the city, for Jericho's walls must fall—as sure as God is in heaven.

And I think there is another thing which must have made it difficult, and it is this, that most probably the citizens of Jericho *insulted* them from the walls. I should think they kept far enough off to be out of arrowshot—but yet it is just possible that if they could not hear the taunt, “What are these feeble Jews doing,” yet they must have seen the tokens of impudence and impertinence which came from over the wall. This, mark you, is very galling to men of arms. We feel our hands fumbling at the hilts of our swords when provoked by the taunts and jeers of our enemies. “What have you done,” they say, “you Protestants, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, against the invincible bulwarks of Rome? Your paper bullets—what have they accomplished against the iron walls of Babylon?” We can hear their jeers. We know the sound of revelry and mirth. But what of this? Though, again, I say, as soldiers we might grow courageous, and dash rashly to the fight, or retire from it because there is nothing to be earned but dishonor—yet, as Christians, we will do what seems absurd to reason—but what is ever justifiable to faith. We will keep on in God's own style; we will fight His battles by His methods, and we doubt not that though it does seem a strange, mad thing—to attempt to drive out the priests from Ireland by the simple proclamation of the truth of God—yet the day shall come when wisdom shall be justified of all her children.

Now, brethren, we know that God has His reasons for making us wait. It *is for His own glory*, we doubt not. We know that all things work together for good, and we believe it will be ultimately *for our profit*. When I have read some masterly tragic poem, and verse after verse has dwelt upon the horrible portion

of the tale, did I wish it shortened? Would I have had the author leave out one of those dark verses? Not I! It is true when the poem ended with a shout of victory, and with the tramp of martial men through the city—when they returned in triumph, our heart leaped; we rejoiced when we came to that last stanza, but we wished the poem not shortened; we never wanted to have any of those verses blotted out. God is writing a great poem of human history, the subject is the victory of His truth, the destruction of anti-Christ. Let the history be long. Who wants it shortened? Who wants a brief story on so exceedingly interesting a subject as this, from so great an Author? No, let it drag on what some may call its weary length—we are sure that when we come to read it, as God will write it, we shall wish the story longer! We will not complain of its extent, for the result is we shall see more of God, and learn more of His mind. You want the millennium to come tomorrow, do you? May you get it, but I think it is probable you will not. I do not know how history appears to you who profess to understand it, but it does not read to me like a thing which is going to end just yet. I have always been told about the “signs of the times.” There always were such speculations—in 1766 and 1666—but the times of the end did not come, and I think they will not come now. It strikes me that we shall have something more elaborate than has ever come from the divine pen, and we may have to go not only through another canto, but through several more books before we shall come to the end of the story. One reason why I think the world’s present state will not wind up for the present is because all the “prophets” say it will, and they have always been a lying generation, from the first even to the last. I mean the prophets who make the business profitable—who only use Scripture as the Norwood Gypsy uses the cards—who shuffle texts to foretell fortunes for nations and men. We shall go on many a day yet. We may have to wait for another century, yes,

another 20 centuries, perhaps, we cannot tell. But our business is still to remember that it shall be, after all, for our eternal benefit, and for God's everlasting glory to keep on—to wait, wait, wait till we grow well-near weary, but the victory comes as surely, after all, as though it came at first.

While we are waiting, however, I think it is well to take a little comfort from what we *are* doing. We are waiting—that is the posture of this Irish Society; but we may console ourselves in it, as the men who were compassing Jericho might have done. “Well,” they could say, “we have not taken Jericho, but there is Rahab who has believed—there are a few saved—you can almost count them on your fingers, but they are very precious, and they are of the kind which should be esteemed very valuable.” There is Rahab, her name is illustrious, and her story, when it is told, has made many another Rahab seek and find a Savior. Not altogether without result was that attack on Jericho; and you have not lost your money, you who have subscribed to our Irish Society. There has been many a sinner saved, and many can tell of eternal love that has sought out with eyes of patience eternity's choice jewels. They can tell of divine sovereignty that has made its crown to glisten and glitter forever with those precious things when found. You have had Rahab, yes, and you have had some who God has made useful to others. I can bear witness that there have come from Ireland some of the most earnest young men upon whom my eyes ever rested—good men and true—who love their Lord and Master, and whose highest delight is to speak well of His name. You may wait patiently on that reflection.

Moreover, the men of arms may say, “We do not take the city, it is true, but yet we keep our ground.” If we were to leave Jericho, we would be giving up our foothold in Canaan. And if we forsake Ireland, we might relinquish all hope of the Papacy falling; but we keep our foothold, at least we take our stand on

the Rock; we have taken legal possession of the land, and though little, it is like the handful which William the Conqueror took up when he said, “I have taken the possession of England hereby.” And though you may amalgamate the management of this Society with another, you will not give up the distinctive aim and object of the Society, which is to keep a corner at least of the Emerald Isle for God and for His Christ.

And then, again, they can say, “We are bearing testimony.” Every man who looks over the wall of Jericho can see the ark of the Covenant. He can see the troopers of God with their swords upon their thighs; they see what they never saw before! Oh, worshippers of idols, you see today the ark of the true God borne round your walls! Oh you who bow to Baal, and adore Ashtaroth, the gods of wood and stone, the true God, the Mighty One, Jehovah, is come out against you, and the trumpets sound defiance to your power, while the warriors of God shout for your overthrow! You are bearing testimony against the sin of Ireland. If you do not succeed, the time has not yet come for the shaking off the dust of your feet, though meanwhile, you must preach the gospel for a testimony against them.

And one thing more, I think the men at arms felt, “We are on the spot when anything does occur.” As they went round the wall, they said, “It stands strong and stern, but it will yield, and then we are all ready when the breach is made.” You do not know what God may have in store for Ireland, or for any nation. According to the law which seems to regulate human society, there comes, every now and then, a great change. Who would have dreamed of the convulsions of 1848, that thrones would have been so unsettled, and that crowns would fall from monarchs’ heads? Such convulsions may come again. No, unless the course of nature is changed, *must* come. Then, we are ready; we stand watching for the gap. O God, in Your eternal



providence be pleased now, even now, to send a convenient season, but if not, we will have the men ready when Your appointed time shall come. It was a grand thing when the earthquake came to shake the prison of Philippi, that there should be a Paul and a Silas there ready to preach the sermon to the trembling jailor and his household. And so when the earthquake comes to Ireland, as it will come, we shall have a Paul and a Silas there. We may have many such, I trust; the more the better, and all ready to stand up with, “Thus says the Lord!” Why what cannot God do? Has not He lately given you an installment of what He can accomplish in the revival which seemed to shake the north of Ireland? It is true it occurred in a part where Romanism is less strong—but the same power which can move the stolidity of Protestantism can stir the fiery zeal of what is genuine religion in its way—I mean genuine, though mistaken, because like Paul, they think they do God service. The hearty spirit of the Irishman with his popery may certainly be reached by divine omnipotence, as well as the soul of the Irishman of the north with his much colder creed. Let us have hope and go on compassing the city, not changing anything that is right, and not neglecting that which is according to Scripture, but waiting till the time shall come.

Now upon this, I think I shall say no more, except again to ask friends practically to carry it out. Let us try and wait—wait patiently—not wait idly, but continue your subscriptions, continue your prayers, continue your interest in the Society, for God would have you wait.

**III.** And, thirdly, God would have His people **WIN**.

I shall not say much about this. We will postpone that till the time when it occurs, and then we shall not need to have any sermons about it, but can all come together, and hold a meeting to praise and bless God. Only let us say that if the analogy is carried out according to the siege of Jericho, the victory is very

*sure*, and when it comes forth, very *complete*. Nothing could be more so. It *may* be very *sudden* also, and it *will* be very glorious. But *we* shall get nothing by it, for when Jericho fell, nobody gained anything except to offer it unto the Lord; so we have to persevere in unselfish service, just toiling on for the Master, remembering that when success comes, it will be all His—every single atom of it—the glory will be to Him, and not to us, and He will take care to send the success in such a manner that nobody shall be able to say, “Glory be to the Irish Society.” Nobody shall be able to say, “Well done, Baptist denomination.” No single minister or evangelist shall be able to say, “Well done, myself.” The one shout that shall go up to heaven will be, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!”

I have thus spoken for the Society. I was asked to preach for it, and I am obliged, I think, to preach with a text that bears somewhat on the subject. I observe many sermons that are preached for Societies might just as well be preached any other day of the week before any other assembly on any other occasion. I do not know that is exactly what is needed, so if we have not dived deep into the doctrines of everlasting love, if we have not taken you to the Savior’s cross, and offered you the invitations of the gospel, if we have not done this, and 50,000 other things, there is a time for every purpose under heaven; and to everyone there is a season, and if we can keep the constituency of this Society working and waiting, and make it in this way to come to be among the winning, we shall rejoice exceedingly!

Brethren, let us begin to carry out the sermon now by our contributions; let us begin to do so by our prayers; let us act out the spirit of it by trying to tell others what the gospel is. Be this the motto of us all—

“Now will I tell sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found;  
Point them to the redeeming blood,  
And cry, ‘Behold the way to God.’”

Yet I dare not sit down till I say to every soul here, and especially to you who cannot take an interest in God’s work because you are not saved—remember, we do not ask you to save and look after the souls of Irishmen. Your own soul must be the first concern; and the way of salvation is simply this—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” He it is who stands in the gap, and makes an atonement for sin. Take Christ to be your atonement, your justifier, your salvation, and your all; and believing in Him you are saved. This is your duty and must not be postponed any longer. You must begin the work at home. Enlist on the side of Israel by following Israel’s leader. Our heavenly Joshua is the Son of God, believe on Him and you shall find salvation through His blood, and acceptance before God through Christ. Then go out to be the means of saving others, and God speed you through His blessed Spirit. Amen.

## 630 THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND – JOHN 3:8

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” — John 3:8

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT, I am not able to enter fully into the subject of the new birth. I am very weary, both in body and mind, and cannot attempt that great and mysterious theme. To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven, and it is not the time to preach upon regeneration when the head is aching, nor to discourse upon the new nature when the mind is distracted. I selected my text with the intention of fixing upon one great illustration, which strikes me just now as being so suggestive, and with divine assistance, I may be able to work it out with profit to you, and ease to myself. I shall endeavor to bring before you the parallel which our Savior here draws between the wind and the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable fact, known I dare say to most of you, that both in the Hebrew and Greek languages the same word is used for spirit and for wind—so that our Savior, as it were, rode upon the wings of the wind, while he was instructing the seeking Rabbi in the deep things of God; He caught at the very name of the wind as a means of fastening a spiritual truth of God upon the memory of the inquirer, hinting to us that

language should be watched by the teacher, that he may find out suitable words, and employ those which will best assist the disciple to comprehend and to retain his teaching. “The wind,” He said, “blows,” and the very same word would have been employed if He had meant to say, “The Spirit blows where He wishes.” There was intended, doubtless, to be a very close and intimate parallel between the Spirit of God and the wind, or otherwise the great Ruler of Providence who invisibly controlled the confusion of Babel would not have fashioned human language so that the same word should stand for both. Language, as well as nature, illustrates the wisdom of God.

It is only in *His* light that we see light—may the Holy Spirit be graciously pleased to reveal Himself in His divine operations to all our waiting minds. We are taught in God’s Word that the Holy Spirit comes upon the sons of men, and makes them new creatures. Until He enters them, they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” They cannot discern the things of God because divine truths of God are spiritual and spiritually discerned—and unrenewed men are carnal, and possess not the power to search out the deep things of God. The Spirit of God creates new the children of God, and then in their new-born spirituality, they discover and come to understand spiritual things, but not before; and therefore, my beloved hearers, unless you *possess* the Spirit, no metaphors, however simple, can reveal Him to you. Let us not mention the name of the Holy Spirit without due honor. Forever blessed are You, most glorious Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son—let all the angels of God worship You! Be You had in honor, world without end!

**I. We will consider IN WHAT SENSE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAY BE COMPARED TO THE WIND.**

The Spirit of God, to help the spiritually-minded in their study of His character and nature, condescends to compare

Himself to dew, fire, oil, water, and other suggestive types; and among the rest, our Savior uses the metaphor of wind. What is the first thought here but that of *mystery*? It was the objection on the score of mystery which our Lord was trying to remove from the mind of Nicodemus. Nicodemus in effect said, “I cannot understand it; how can it be? A man born again, when he is old, created over again, and that from an invisible agency from above? How can these things be?” Jesus at once directed his attention to the wind, which is none the less real and operative because of its mysterious origin and operation. You cannot tell from where the wind comes—you know it blows from the north or from the west—but at what particular place does that wind start on its journey? Where will it pause in its onward flight? You see that it is blowing to the east or to the west, but where is it going? From where did these particles of air originate which rush so rapidly past? Where are they going? By what law are they guided in their course, and where will their journey end? The gale may be blowing due east here, but it may be driving west a hundred miles away. In one district the wind may be rushing from the north, and yet not far from it there may be a strong current from the south. Those who ascend in balloons tell us that they meet with crosscurrents—one wind blowing in this direction, and another layer of air moving towards an opposite quarter—how is this? If you have watched the skies, you must occasionally have noticed a stream of clouds hurrying to the right, while higher up, another company is sailing to the left! It is a question whether thunder and lightning may not be produced by the friction of two currents of air traveling in different directions. But why is it that this current takes it into its head to go this way, while another steers for quite another port? Will they meet across each other’s path in regions far away?

Are there whirlpools in the air as in the water? Are there eddies, currents, rivers of air, lakes of air? Is the whole atmosphere like the sea, only composed of less dense matter? If so, what is it that stirs up that great deep of air, and bids it howl in the hurricane, and then constrains it to subside into the calm? The philosopher may scheme some conjecture to prove that the “trade winds” blow at certain intervals because of the sun crossing the equator at those periods, and that there must necessarily be a current of air going towards the equator because of the rarefaction; but he cannot tell you why the weathercock on yonder church steeple turned this morning from south-west to due east. He cannot tell me why it is that the sailor finds that his sails are at one time filled with wind, and in a few minutes they fall loosely about, so that he must steer upon another tack if he would make headway. The various motions of the air remain a mystery to all but the Infinite Jehovah. My brethren, the like mystery is observed in the work of the Spirit of God. His Person and work are not to be comprehended by the mind of man. He may be here tonight, but you cannot see Him—He speaks to one heart, but others cannot hear His voice. He is not recognizable by the unrefined senses of the unregenerate. The spiritual man discerns Him, feels Him, hears Him, and delights in Him, but neither wit nor learning can lead a man into the secret. The believer is often bowed down with the weight of the Spirit’s glory, or lifted up upon the wings of His majesty; but even he knows not how these feelings are worked in him. The fire of holy life is at seasons gently fanned with the soft breath of divine comfort, or the deep sea of spiritual existence, stirred with the mighty blast of the Spirit’s rebuke; but still it is forevermore a mystery how the eternal God comes into contact with the finite mind of His creature, man, filling all heaven, meanwhile, and yet dwelling in a human body as in a temple—occupying all space,

and yet operating upon the will, the judgment, the mind of the poor insignificant creature called man.

We may inquire, but who can answer us? We may search, but who shall lead us into the hidden things of the Most High? He brooded over chaos, and produced order, but who shall tell us after what fashion He worked? He overshadowed the virgin, and prepared a body for the Son of God, but into this secret who shall dare pry? His is the anointing, sealing, comforting, and sanctifying of the saints—but how does He work all these things? He makes intercession for us according to the will of God; He dwells in us, and leads us into all the truths of God—but who among us, can explain to his fellow man, the order of the divine working? Though veiled from human eye like the glory which shone between the cherubim, we believe in the Holy Spirit, and therefore see Him; but if our faith needed to sustain it, we should never believe at all.

Mystery is far from being all which the Savior would teach by this simile. Surely He meant to show us that the operations of the Spirit are like the wind for *divinity*. Who can create a wind? The most ambitious of human princes would scarcely attempt to turn, much less to send forth the wind. These steeds of the storm know no bit nor bridle; neither will they come at any man's bidding. Let our senators do what they will; they will scarcely have the madness to legislate the winds. Old Boreas, as the heathens called him, is not to be bound with chains and welded on an earthly anvil, or in a vulcanian forge. "The wind blows where it wishes and it does so because God directs it, and allows it not to stay for man, nor to tarry for the sons of men. So with the Spirit of God; all the true operations of the Spirit are due in no sense whatever to man, but always to God, and to His sovereign will. Revivalists may get up excitement with the best intentions, and may warm peoples' hearts till they begin to cry out, but all this ends in nothing unless it is divine



work. Have I not said scores of times from this pulpit, “All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled”? Every particle which nature puts upon the foundation will turn out to be but “wood, hay, and stubble,” and will be consumed. It is only “the gold, the silver, and the precious stones” of God’s building that will stand the fiery test. “You must be born-again from above,” for human regenerations are lies. You may blow with your mouth, and produce some trifling effects upon trifles as light as air; man in his zeal may set the windmills of silly minds in motion; but, truly, to stir men’s hearts with substantial and eternal truths of God needs a celestial breeze such as the Lord alone can send! Did not our Lord also intend to hint at the *sovereignty* of the Spirit’s work? For what other reason did He say, “The wind blows where it wishes?” There is arbitrariness about the wind, it does just as it pleases, and the laws which regulate its changes are unknown to man. “Free as the wind,” we say—“The wild winds.” So is the mighty working of God!

It is a very solemn thought, and one which should tend to make us humble before the Lord—that we are, as to the matter of salvation, entirely in His hands! If I have a moth in my hand tonight, I can bruise its wings, or I can crush it at my will, and by no attempts of its own can it escape from me. And every sinner is absolutely in the hands of God, and, let him remember he is in the hands of an angry God, too. The only comfort is that he is in the hands of a God who, for Jesus’ sake, delights to have mercy upon even the vilest of the vile. Sinner, God can give you the Holy Spirit if He wills; but if He should say concerning you, “Let him alone,” your fate is sealed, your damnation is sure! It is a thought which some would say is “enough to freeze all energy.” Beloved, I would to God it would freeze the energy of the flesh, and make the flesh dead in the sense of powerlessness—for God never truly begins to show His might till we have seen an end of all human power. I

tell you, sinner, you are as dead concerning spiritual things, as the corpse that is laid in its coffin! No, as the corpse that is rotting in its grave and has become, like Lazarus in the tomb, stinking and offensive. There is a voice that can call you forth out of your sepulcher, but if that voice comes not, remember where you are—justly damned, justly ruined, justly cut off forever from all hope! What do you say? Do you tremble at this? Do you cry, “O God, have pity upon me”? He will hear your cry, sinner, for there never yet was a sincere cry that went up to heaven, though it were ever so feeble, but what it had an answer of peace. When one of the old saints lay dying, he could only say, “O Lord, I trust You *languida fide*,” with a languid faith. It is poor work that, but, oh, it is *safe* work. You can only trust Christ with a feeble faith; if it is such a poor trembling faith that it does not grip Him, but only *touches* the hem of His garment, it nevertheless saves you! If you can look at Him, though it is only a great way off, yet it saves you. And oh, what a comfort this is, that you are still on pleading terms with Him and in a place of hope. “Whoever believes is not condemned.” But, oh, do not trifle with the day of divine grace, lest having frequently heard the warning, and hardened your neck just as often, you should “suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy,” for if He shuts you out, none can bid you come in; if He does but close the iron bar, you are shut out in the darkness of obstinacy, stubbornness, and despair forever—the victim of your own delusions! Sinner, if God saves you, He shall have all the glory—for He has a right to do as He wills—for He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

But still I think I have not yet brought out what is in the text. Do you not think that the text was intended to show the *varied methods* in which the Spirit of God works in the conversion and regeneration of men? “The wind blows where

it wishes.” Now observe the different *force* of the wind. This afternoon the wind seemed as if it would tear up every tree, and doubtless, had they been in leaf, many of those noble princes of the forest must have stretched themselves prone upon the earth. But God takes care that in these times of boisterous gales there should be no leaf, and therefore the wind gets but little purchase with which to drag up a tree. But the wind does not always blow as it did this afternoon. On a summer's evening there is such a gentle zephyr, that even the gnats which have been arranging a dance among themselves are not disturbed, but keep to their proper places. Yes, the aspen seems as if it could be quiet, though you know it keeps forever quivering, according to the old legend that it was the tree on which the Savior hung, and therefore still trembles, as though through fear of the sin which came upon it. It is but a legend. There are times when all is still and calm, when everything is quiet, and you can scarcely detect the wind at all. Now, just so it is with the Spirit of God. To some of us He came like a “rushing mighty wind.” Oh, what tearing of soul there were then! My spirit was like a sea tossed up into tremendous waves, made, as Job says, “To boil like a pot,” till one would think the deep were hoary. Oh, how that wind came crashing through my soul, and every hope I had was bowed as the trees of the forest in the tempest. Read the story of John Bunyan's conversion—it was just the same. Turn to Martin Luther— you find his conversion of the same sort. So might I mention hundreds of biographies in which the Spirit of God came like a tornado, sweeping everything before it, and the men could not but feel that God was in the whirlwind.

To others He comes so gently they cannot tell when first the Spirit of God came. They recollect that night when mother prayed so with brothers and sisters, and when they could not sleep for hours because the big tears stood in their eyes on

account of sin. They recollect the Sunday school and the teacher there. They remember that earnest minister. They cannot say exactly when they gave their hearts to God, and they cannot tell about any violent convictions. They are often comforted by that text, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” But they cannot get any farther—they sometimes wish they could. Well, they need not wish it, for the Spirit of God, as a sovereign, will always choose His own way of operation; and if it is but the wind of the Holy Spirit, remember it is as saving in its gentleness as in its terror, and is as efficient to make us new creatures when it comes with the zephyr’s breath as when it comes with the hurricane’s force. Do not quarrel with God’s way of saving you. If you are brought to the cross, be thankful for it—Christ will not mind how you got there. If you can say, “He is all my salvation, and all my desire,” you never came to that without the Spirit of God bringing you to it. Do not, therefore, think you came the wrong way, for that is impossible!

Again, the wind not only differs in force, but it differs in *direction*. We have been saying several times, the wind is always shifting. Perhaps there never were two winds that blew in exactly the same direction. I mean that if we had power to detect the minute points of the compass, there would be found some deviation in every current, although, of course, for all practical purposes, it blows from certain distinct points which the mariner marks out. Now, the Spirit of God comes from different directions. You know very well, dear friends, that sometimes the Spirit of God will blow with mighty force from one denomination of Christians; then suddenly they seem to be left, and God will raise up another body of Christians, fill them with Himself, and qualify them for usefulness. In the days of Wesley and Whitefield, there was very little of the divine Spirit anywhere except among the Methodists. I am sure they have

not a monopoly of Him now. The divine Spirit blows also from other quarters. Sometimes He uses one man, sometimes another; we hear of a revival in the north of Ireland; by-and-by it is in the south of Scotland. It comes just as God wills, for direction; and you know, too, dear friends, it comes through different instrumentalities in the same church. Sometimes the wind blows from this pulpit—God blesses me to your conversion. Another time it is from my good sister, Mrs. Bartlett's class; on a third occasion it is the Sunday school; again, it may be another class, or the preaching of the young men, or from the individual exertion of private believers. God causes that wind to blow just which way He wills. He works, also, through different texts of Scripture. *You* were converted and blessed under one text—it was quite another that was made useful to *me*. Some of you were brought to Christ by terrors, others of you by love, by sweet wooing words. The wind blows as God directs. Now, dear friends, whenever you take up a religious biography, do not sit down and say, "Now I will see whether I am just like this person." Nonsense! God never repeats Himself. Men make steel pens—thousands of grosses of them—all alike, but I will be bound to say that in quills from the common, there are no two of them precisely the same. If you look, you will soon discover that they differ in a variety of ways. Certain gardeners cut their trees into the shape of cheeses, and a number of unnatural forms, but God's trees do not grow that way, they grow just anyway—gnarl their roots and twist their branches.

Great painters do not continually paint the same picture again, and again, and again, and my divine Master never puts His pencil on the canvas to produce the same picture twice. Every Christian is a distinct work of divine grace on God's part, which has in it some originality, some portion distinct from all others. I do not believe in trying to make all history uniform. It

is said that Richard III had a humpback. Whether he really was deformed, or whether history gave him the humpback, I cannot tell, but it is said that all his courtiers thought it was the most beautiful humpback that ever was seen, and they all began to grow humpbacks, too; and I have known ministers who had some peculiar idiosyncrasy of experience, which was nothing better than a spiritual humpback—but their people all began to have humpbacks, too—to think and talk all in the same way, and to have the same doubts and fears. Now that will not do! It is not the way in which the Most High acts with regard to the wind, and if He chooses to take all the points of the compass, and make use of them all, let us bless and glorify His name! Are not the different winds *various in their qualities*? Few of us like an east wind. Most of us are very glad when the wind blows from the south. Vegetation seems to love much the south-west. A stiff northeaster is enough to make us perish; and long continuance of the north may well freeze the whole earth; while from the west, the wind seems to come laden with health from the deep blue sea; and though sometimes too strong for the sick, yet it is never a bad time when the west wind blows. The ancients all had their different opinions about wind; some were dry, some were rainy, some affected this disease, some touched this part of men, some the other. Certain it is that God's Holy Spirit has different qualities. In the canticles He blows softly with the sweet breath of love—look farther, and you get that same Spirit blowing fiercely with threats and denunciation; sometimes you find Him convicting the world “of sin, of righteousness, of judgment.” That is the north wind; at other times opening up Christ to the sinner, and giving him joy and comfort; that is the south wind that blows softly and gives a balminess in which poor troubled hearts rejoice; and yet, “all these works the same Spirit.”

Indeed, my subject is all but endless, and therefore I must stop. But even in the matter of *duration*, you know how the wind will sometimes blow six weeks in this direction, and, again, continue in another direction. And the Spirit of God does not always work with us—He does as He pleases—He comes and He goes. We may be in a happy hallowed frame at one time, and at another we may have to cry, “Come from the four winds, O Breath!”

**II. We will consider, in the second place, THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WIND.**

“You hear the sound of it.” Ah, that we do! The wind sometimes wails as if you could hear the cry of mariners far out at sea, or the moans of the widows that must weep for them. And, oh, the Spirit of God sets men wailing with an exceedingly bitter cry for sin, as one that is in sorrow for his first-born, “You hear the sound of it.” Oh, it is a blessed sound, that wailing! Angels rejoice over “one sinner who repents.” Then comes the wind at another time, with a triumphant sound, and if there is an Aeolian harp in the window, how it swells, sweeps, descends—then rises again, gives all the tones of music, and makes the air glad with its jubilant notes. So with the Holy Spirit—sometimes He gives us faith, makes us bold—other times full of assurance, confidence, joy and peace in believing. “You hear the sound” of a tuning fork of the Holy Spirit’s mighty melody within the soul of man filling him with peace and joy, and rest, and love. Sometimes the wind comes, too, with another sound, as though it were contending. You heard it, perhaps, this afternoon. We who are a little in the country, hear it more than you do—it is as though giants were struggling in the sky with each other. It seems as if two seas of air, both lashed to fury, met and dashed against some unseen cliffs with terrible uproar. The Spirit of God comes into the soul

sometimes, and makes great contention with the flesh. Oh, what a stern striving there is against unbelief, against lust, against pride, against every evil thing.

“You hear the sound of it.” You who know what, divine experience, means—you know when to go forth to fight your sins. When you can hear “the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,” then you bestir yourself to destroy your sins. Sometimes the wind comes with a sweep as though it were going on forever; it comes past and dashes through the trees, sweeping away the rotten branches; then away it goes across the Alps, dashing down an avalanche in its course, still onward; and as it flies, it blows away everything that is frail and weak, and on, on, on it speeds its way to some unknown goal. And thus it is sometimes the Spirit of God will come right through us, as if He were bearing us away to that spiritual heritage which is our sure future destiny—bearing away coldness, barrenness, everything before it. We do not lament then that we do not pray, we do not believe that we cannot pray—“I can do everything,” is our joyful shout, as we are carried on the wings of the wind. “You hear the sound of it.” I hope you have heard it sometimes in all its powerful, overwhelming, mighty influence till your soul has been blown away. “You hear the sound of it.”

But then, the wind does something more than make a sound; and so does the Holy Spirit. It WORKS and produces manifest results. Just think what the wind is doing tonight. I cannot tell at what pitch it may be now. It is just possible that in some part of the ocean, a vessel scuds along almost under bare poles; the mariners do their best to reef the sails—away she goes—now the mast is gone—they do their best to bear up, but they find that in the teeth of the gale, they cannot stand. The ship dashes on the rocks, and she is wrecked. And, oh, the Spirit of God is a great wrecker of false hopes and carnal



confidences! I have seen the Spirit of God come to a sinner like a storm to a ship at sea. He had to take down the top gallants of the sinner's pride, and then every thread of carnal confidence had to be reefed, and then his hope, itself, had to be cut away. And on, on the vessel went, until she struck a rock, and down she went. The man from that time never dared trust in his merits, for he had seen his merits wrecked and broken in pieces by the wind. The wind, too, remember, is a great *leveler*. It always aims at everything that is high. If you are down low in the street, you escape its fury. But climb to the top of the Monument, or St. Paul's, and see whether you do not feel it! Get into the valley, it is all right; the lower branches of the trees are scarcely moved, but the top branches are rocked to and fro by it. It is a great leveler! So is the Holy Spirit. He never sees a man high, but He brings him down; He makes every high thought bow before the majesty of His might; and if you have any high thoughts tonight, rest assured that when the Spirit of God comes, He will lay them low, even with the ground. Now, do not let this make you fear the Holy Spirit. It is a blessed thing to be rocked so as to have our hopes tested, and it is a precious thing to have our carnal confidences shaken. And how blessedly the wind *purifies* the atmosphere! In the Swiss valleys there is heaviness in the air, which makes the inhabitants unhealthy. They take quinine, and you see them going about with big swellings in their necks. From Martigny to Bretagne, there is a great valley in which you will see hundreds of persons diseased. The reason is that the air does not circulate. They are breathing the same air, or some of it, that their fathers breathed before them. There seems to be no ventilation between the two parts of the giant Alps, and the air never circulates; but if they have a great storm which sweeps through the valleys, it is a great blessing to the people. And so the Spirit of God comes and cleanses out our evil thoughts, and

vain imaginations—and though we do not like the hurricane, yet it brings spiritual health to our soul.

Again, the wind is a great *trier of the nature of things*. Here comes a great rushing up the street; it sweeps over the heaps of rubbish lying in the road, away goes all the light chaff, paper and other things which have no weight in them; they cannot stand the brunt of its whirling power. But look, the pieces of iron, the stones, and all weighty things are left unmoved. In the country you will often see the farmer severing the chaff from the wheat by throwing it up into a current of air, and the light husks all blow away, while the heavy wheat sinks on the heap, cleansed and purified. So is the Holy Spirit the great testing power and the result of His operations will be to show men what they are. Here is a hypocrite, he has passed muster up to now, and reckons himself to be a true and genuine man. But there comes a blast from heaven's mighty Spirit, and he finds himself to be lighter than vanity—he has no weight in him, he is driven on and has no rest, he can find no peace; he hurries from one refuge of lies to another. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Thus also we try the doctrines of men, we bring the breath of inspiration to bear upon them—do they abide the test? Or are they driven away? Can you hold that truth in the presence of God? Can you cling to it, and find it stable in the hour of trial? Is it a nice pleasant speculation for a sunny day when all is calm and bright, or will it bear the rough rude blast of adversity when God's Holy Spirit is purifying you with His healthful influence? True Christians, and sound doctrines have ballast and weight in them—they are not moved nor driven away. But empty professors and hollow dogmas, are scattered like chaff before the wind, when the Lord shall blow upon them with the breath of His Spirit. Therefore examine yourselves—try the doctrines, and see if they are of God. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord. Have root in

yourselves—then you will not wither in the hot blast, nor be driven away in the tempestuous day.

Is not the Spirit moreover like unto the wind in its *developing of character*? See the dust is lying all over the picture, you cannot see the fair features of the beauteous sketch beneath; blow off the dust, and the fine colors will be seen, and once more the skill of the painter will be admired. Have you ever noticed some piece of fine mosaic, or perhaps some well-cut engraving on metal all hidden, and the fine lines filled up with dust? You have blown off the accumulation, and then you could admire the work. So does the Spirit of God. Men get all covered with dust in the hot dusty roadside of life, till they are nearly the color of the earth itself; but they come to the hilltop of Calvary, and here they stand till the wind of heaven has cleansed them from all the dust that has gathered around their garments. Oh there is nothing like communion with the Spirit of God to counteract the earthly tendencies of a business life. There are some men who get covered with a yellow dust till they are almost hidden by it; they can talk of nothing else but money. Gold, gold, gold, is getting to occupy nearly every thought. I have no quarrel with money in its right place, but I do not like to see men live in it. I always try to drive away that mean and groveling spirit, which lives for nothing else but to accumulate money, but I cannot always succeed. Now the Spirit of God will make a man see his folly and put his money into its right position, and place the graces of the Christian character where men can see them and glorify God in them. Never let your business character or professional skill, dim and hide your Christianity. If you do, God's Spirit will come to brighten you up, and He will have no mercy on these, but will, in love to your soul, cleanse and give luster to God's work which is worked in you. I have also noticed how *helpful* the wind is to all who choose to avail themselves of it. In Lincolnshire, where the country is flat and

below the level of the sea, they are obliged to drain the land by means of windmills, and hundreds of them may be seen pumping up the water, so as to relieve the land of the excess moisture. In many parts of the country nearly all the wheat and corn is ground by means of the wind. If it were not for the wind, the inhabitants would be put to great inconvenience.

The Spirit of God is thus also a mighty helper, to all who will avail themselves of His influences. You are inundated with sin, a flood of iniquity comes in—you can never bale out the torrent, but with the help of God's Spirit, it can be done! He will so assist that you shall see the flood gradually descending, and your heart once more purified. You need always to ask His help—fresh sin, like falling showers, will be poured into you by every passing day, and you will need a continuous power to cast it out—you may have it in God's Spirit! He will, with ceaseless energy, help you to combat sin, and make you more than a conqueror. Or, on the other hand, if you need some power to break up and prepare your spiritual food for you, you will find no better help than what God's Spirit can give. In eastern countries they grind corn by hand, two sitting at a small stone mill; but it is a poor affair at best—so are our own vain attempts to prepare the bread of heaven for ourselves. We shall only get a little, and that little, badly ground. Commentators are good in their way, but give me the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He makes the passage clear, and gives me to eat of the finest wheat. How often we have found our utter inability to understand some part of divine truth—we asked some of God's people, and they helped us a little—but after all, we were not satisfied, till we took it to the throne of heavenly grace and implored the teachings of the blessed Spirit; then how sweetly it was opened to us; we could eat of it spiritually. It was no longer husk and shell, hard to be understood; it was as bread to us, and we could eat to the full. Brethren, we must make more use of the wisdom

which comes from above, for the Spirit, like the wind, is open to us all, to employ for our own personal benefit. I see also here, a thought, as to the cooperation of man and the Spirit in all Christian work. It has pleased God to make us co-workers with Him—fellow laborers— both in the matter of our own salvation, and also in the effort to benefit others.

Look for a moment at yon stately boat—she moves not because of her sails, but she would not reach the desired haven without them. It is the wind which propels her forward—but the wind would not act upon her as it does, unless she had the rigging all fixed—her masts standing, and her sails all bent so as to catch the passing breeze. But now that human seamanship has done its best, see how she flies! She will soon reach her haven with such a favoring gale as that. You have only to stand still and see how the wind bears her on like a thing of life. And so it is with the human heart. When the Spirit comes to the soul that is ready to receive such influences, then He helps you on to Christian grace and Christian work, and makes you bear up through all opposition, till you come to the Port of Peace and can anchor safely there. Without Him we can do nothing—without us He will not work. We are to preach the gospel to every creature, and while one plants, and another waters, God adds the increase. We are to work out our own salvation, but He works in us, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. We must go up to possess the goodly land with our own spear and sword, but the hornet goes before us to drive out the foe. Jericho shall be captured by a divine and miraculous interference, but even there, rams' horns shall find a work to do, and must be employed. The host of Midian shall be slain, but our cry is, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." We give God all the glory, nevertheless we use the means. The water of Jordan must be sought out and used by all, who desire a cleansing like Naaman the Syrian. A lump of figs must be

used if other Hezekiahs are to be healed, but the Spirit is, after all, the great Cleanser and Healer of His people Israel. The lesson is clear to all—the wind turns mills that men make; fills sails that human hands have spread; and the Spirit blesses human effort, crowns with success our labors, establishes the work of our hands upon us, and teaches all through that, “The hand of the diligent makes rich,” but “if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Another thought suggests itself to my mind in connection with the wind and human effort; it is this—how completely dependent men are upon the wind, as to what it shall do for them. They are entirely at its mercy as to its time of blowing, its strength, and the direction it will take. I have already dwelt upon this thought of the sovereignty of the wind, but it comes up here in a more practical form. The steamer now can steer almost anywhere they please, and at all times it will proceed on its voyage; but the sailing ship must tack according to the wind, and when becalmed, must wait for the breeze to spring up. The water mill and steam mill can be worked night and day, but the mill that depends upon the wind must abide by the wind’s times of blowing, and must turn round its sails, so as to suit the direction of the current of air. In like manner we are compelled to wait on the pleasure of the Spirit. There is no reservoir of water which we can turn on when we will, and work as we please. We would forget God far more than we do now if that were the case. The sailor who is depending on the wind, anxiously looks up to the masthead to see how the breeze is shifting and turning round the vane; and he scans the heavens to see what weather he is likely to have. He would not need to care nearly so much as he does, now that he is absolutely dependent on the wind, if he had steam power so as to sail in the very teeth of the storm if he so willed. God, then, keeps us looking up to heaven, by making us to be completely at His

mercy as to the times and ways of giving us His helping power. It is a blessed thing to wait on God, watching for His hand, and in quiet contentment leaving all to Him. Brethren, let us do our part faithfully, spread every sail, make all as perfect as human skill and wisdom can direct, and then, in patient continuance in well-doing, wait the Spirit's propitious gales, neither murmuring because He tarries, nor be taken unawares when He comes upon us in His sovereign pleasure, to do that which seems good in His sight.

Now tonight I have only given you some hints on this subject—you can work it out for yourselves. As you hear the wind, you may get more sermons out of it than I can give you just now. The thing is perfectly inexhaustible; and I think the business of the minister is not to say all that can be said about the subject. Somebody remarked concerning a certain minister, that he was a most unfair preacher because he always exhausted the subject, and left nothing for anybody else to say. That will never be said of me, and I would rather that it should not. A minister should suggest germs of thought; open up new ways and present, if possible, the truth of God in such a method, as to lead men to understand that the half is not told them.

And now, my dear hearer, whether you listen often to my voice, or have now stepped in for the first time, I would like to ring this in your ear: Do you know the Spirit of God? If you have not the Spirit, you are none of His. "You must be born-again." "What, Lord, 'MUST?' Do You not mean 'may?'" No, you *must*. "Does it not mean, 'You can be?'" No, you *must*. When a man says, "Must," it all depends upon who he is. When God says, "Must," there it stands, and it cannot be questioned. There are the flames of hell—would you escape from them? You must be born-again. There are heaven's glories sparkling in their own light—would you enjoy them? You must be born-again! There is the peace and joy of a believer, would you have

it? You must be born-again. What, not a crumb from off the table without this? No, not one; not a drop of water to cool your burning tongues except you are born-again. This is the one condition that never changes. God never alters it, and never will. You must, *must*, MUST. Which shall it be? Shall your will stand, or God's will? O, let God's "must" ride right over you, and bow yourselves down, and say, "Lord, I must, then I will; ah, and it has come to this—I must tonight—

'Give me Christ, or else I die.'

I have hold of the knocker of the door of Your mercy, and I *must*, I WILL, get that door open. I will never let You go except You bless me. You say *must*, Lord, and I say *must* too."

"You must, you must be born-again." God fulfill the "must" in each of your cases, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.



**631 THE BELIEVER SINKING IN THE MIRE –**  
**Ps. 69:14**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.” — Psalm  
69:14**

MANY RIVERS, and especially the Nile, have on their banks deep deposits of black mud, and when any person seeks to leap on shore, if he should ignorantly, or through misfortune, spring upon this soft mud he would, unless speedily pulled out, be sucked under until he was utterly swallowed up and suffocated in the mire. Having no handhold or foothold, the more he labored to extricate himself from the thick adhesive mud, the deeper he would descend until he would be choked in the filth, unless someone was near to help him out and save him from destruction. True believers, beloved, are sometimes in deep mire, and in fear of being swallowed up. This was the state and condition of the Psalmist when he wrote this Psalm. He felt that he was sinking and could not deliver himself, and therefore, he cries unto God for strength in the words of the text, “Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”

Mr. Gadsby, in his “Wanderings,” narrates an incident which, with reflections of his own, I shall read to you at the outset. “Being brought to a stand as just mentioned, I hailed the captain to heave to, and take me on board. One of the men

was, therefore, sent in the small boat, but the river near the western side was so shallow that he could not get the boat within some distance of the bank. He consequently, as is usual in such cases, jumped overboard that he might carry me to the boat on his back. No sooner, however, had he sprung from the boat than I heard him scream. I turned to see what was the matter, and I found him struggling in the mud. He was sinking as though in quicksand; and the more he struggled, the faster and deeper he sank. His fellow boatmen were not slack—they quickly saw the dilemma he was in, and two of them dashed in and swam to the small boat. I was almost choked with terror, and I breathed, or rather gasped with difficulty. ‘Can they reach the poor fellow?’ I said to myself. ‘If not, he must inevitably be swallowed up alive!’ Now they reach the boat! Now they are near him! And now, praise the Lord, he grasps firmly hold—O that death-like grasp!—of the side of the boat! But this was not until he had sunk up to his chest. Seeing him safe, I breathed more freely, and I feel that now, though only relating the circumstance, the excitement has caused an increased and painful action of the heart. How I thought of poor David! Had he really witnessed a similar scene to this, literally, when, speaking of the feelings of his soul spiritually, he said, ‘I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me’ (Psa 69:2)? O what an agonizing state to be in! And yet many of my readers, I have no doubt, who never witnessed such a scene literally, know something about it spiritually, as David did, whether he had seen it with his bodily eyes or not. Well might he, in the struggling of his soul, exclaim, ‘Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink! (verse 14). Let me grasp firmly hold of the ark and be pulled safely on board! Well! Just at the right time, just before the poor fellow’s arms (shall I say his arms of faith?) were disabled, swallowed up—deliverance came!’”

The prayer of our text leads us to three reflections—*first, that the true believer may be in the mire, and very near sinking. Secondly, that the true believer may be in such a condition that God alone can deliver him.* And thirdly, that in whatever condition the believer may be, *prayer is forevermore his safe refuge*—if a man finds that his own strength fails, he can look up to Him who is an ever present help in time of trouble, and cry to Him, “Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”

**I. We commence with the statement that THE TRUE BELIEVER MAY BE IN THE MIRE.**

Let us consider for a moment *what kind of mire the believer may be brought into, and why God allows him to be brought there, and how we can prove that he is really and truly a believer, although God allows him to be brought into the mire.*

1. The truest believer in the world may be brought into the *deep mire of unbelief*. Some of us who have preached the Word for years, and have been the means of working faith in others, and of establishing them in the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, have, nevertheless, been the subjects of the most fearful and violent doubts as to the truth of the very gospel we have preached. Times may have occurred to the best of God's servants, when they have even doubted the existence of the God whom they have loved to serve, when even the Deity and reality of the Lord Jesus who has rescued them from sin by His precious blood, has been a matter of grievous and horrible questioning. Little do people know, who are ignorant of the private history of God's believing people, what struggles they have with their own base-born, wicked unbelief. It is not only Thomas who has said, “Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe,” but there have been thousands of eminent saints who have been attacked by unbelief, and have been in doubt as to things which they once received as certain truths of God, and

which still, in their heart of hearts, they know to be true. They could have died for those truths one day. They could have established them beyond all doubt and question the next day, and yet upon the third, they are compelled, through strong temptation, to sit down, and with tears streaming from their eyes, cry bitterly unto their Helper, “Oh, God, save me from this accursed unbelief which robs me of every comfort, and takes the foundations away, and lays my glory in the dust! What can I do? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? O settle my soul upon Your Word, and establish me in Your truth, O God of truth.” A man may be a true believer, and yet feel that he is sinking fast into the mire and clay of unbelief as some of us know, to our lamentation and dismay.

A believer may be quite settled in his belief of the gospel, and may never doubt the inspiration of Scripture, the atonement of Christ, and all those precious truths which are commonly received among us, and yet through sin or temptation, or some other cause, *he may not have a full assurance of his own interest* in those glorious and vital truths! A true believer in Christ, in fact, may often suspect himself to be a hypocrite when he is most sincere—to be an apostate when he is most diligently following the Lord. And he may set himself down as the chief of sinners when the testimony of men and of God is, that, “He is a perfect and an upright man, one who fears God and eschews evil.” A believer may be in a state of high spiritual health and yet may think himself to be sick unto death! He may be clothed in fair white linen, and yet reckon himself to be naked, poor, and miserable. He may be rich with all the treasures of his heavenly Father’s kingdom, and yet may scarcely know where he can find a ready crust with which to supply his present pressing spiritual needs. There are such things as princes in rags; and there have been such things, and

probably are now, as princes of the blood-royal peers of God's own realm sitting on the dunghill. Many a justified and accepted saint has had to moan out under a deep sense of sin, just as the poor publican did, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I dare say many of you think that God's ministers never have any question about their interest in Jesus Christ. I wish they never had—brethren, I wish sincerely *I* never had! It is seldom that I do—very seldom; but there are times when I would change my soul's place with the poorest believer out of heaven, when I would be content to sit behind the door of heaven, if only I might be numbered among God's people! True believers sometimes droop into this state—whether they are God's people or not, they cannot tell; whether their sins are forgiven or not is a matter of solemn inquiry with their souls; whether they have ever passed from death unto life or not is the great problem which they sit down and earnestly consider; and whether they are God's people or not is a question they have great difficulty in answering. This is deep mire, indeed; for it is woe with another woe at its heels to lose the assurance of one's present salvation.

In addition to this, at times, the Lord's chosen are brought into another kind of mire which will never swallow them up, but which may prove a matter of very severe trial to them while they are in it. I mean *temporal trouble*. When the soul is alarmed about spiritual things, and bodily or pecuniary troubles also come, then the sea is boisterous, indeed. It is ill when two seas meet; when Moab and Ammon come against Judah at the same time; when both upper and nether springs appear to be dried up; when God, with both hands, thrusts us into the deep mire. Certain of my brothers are frequently in trouble. Their whole life is a floundering out of one slough of despond into another. You have had many losses in business—nothing but losses, perhaps. You have had many crosses, disappointments,

bereavements— nothing prospers with you. Well, brother, there is this consolation—you are one of a very large family, for many of God’s people pass through just such tribulation. It was said by Matthew Henry, I think, that, “Prosperity was the blessing of the Old Covenant, but that adversity is the peculiar blessing of the New.” I do not know whether that is true or not, but I do know this, that Christ has said, “In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” It is no sign, beloved, that you are not a child of God because you feel the rod—it is rather a token of your being one of the adopted, because you are made to pass under the rod of the covenant, and to utter the prayer of David—“Lord, deliver me out of the deep mire, and let me not sink.” You are allowed to plead against the thing you so much fear; you may cry, “Leave me not to become penniless! Leave me not to dishonor my character!” But remember that none of your trials can prove you to be a lost man. Pray, brother, the prayer of that good man who asked for neither poverty nor riches; ask that you may have food convenient for you; pray, “Give me this day my daily bread.” “Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”

I have not come to the blackest mire yet. God’s own people are, at seasons, allowed to sink in the mire of *inward corruption*. There are times when believers have such a sight of the little hell within their own hearts, that they are ready to despair of the possibility of their being completely sanctified and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Our God, at seasons, permits the fountains of the great deep of human depravity to be broken up, and then, what floods of sin come pouring forth! We little know what lies secreted in our deceitful hearts—envy, blasphemies, murders, lust—there is enough in the heart of any man to make a full-grown devil if restraining grace did not prevent it. Today, you

may have had such enjoyments of the Lord's countenance that you have been ready to sing—"You have made my mountain to stand strong; I shall never be moved." But tomorrow, you may have such a sight of self that you may exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Remember, if you have the nature of God in you, you have also the nature of the old Adam. You are one with Christ and "as is the heavenly, such are they, also, who are heavenly." But you are also one with Adam and "as is the earthy, such are they, also, who are earthy." You are to be immortal, but you are reminded that you are mortal; you are one day to be raised in glory, but you must remember, as long as you are here, the time of glory is not come, for you drag about, to your shame, your weakness, your dishonor, and your misery—a body of sin and death. The best of God's children know this; and I think the holier they are, the more likely they are to feel the conflict within. It is the fashion in our country for men to wear black coats; I suppose it is because they do not show the dirt as much as a white garment—and if we wore white garments the filth would reveal itself, and we would have to change them very often. So, my beloved, the more a Christian is like his Master, the more clearly he sees his own faults. Oh, Lord, grant us divine grace to see much of our sins through the tears of repentance, and to see much of the Savior through the eyes of faith—for if we see little of Him, we shall get into the plight of David when he was in the deep mire, and cried, "Lord, deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink."

Beloved, it is painful to reflect that the best of God's people are allowed to fall into the mire of *Satanic temptations*. There is no knowing what suggestion Satan may thrust into the ears and into the soul of the greatest believer that heaven ever made. God may whisper in your ears one day, and Satan the next, and yet you may be a child of God on both occasions. Oh,

beloved, I dare scarcely say in the midst of this assembly what I know on this point. If I were only to reveal my own struggles and conflicts with Satan, I might stagger some of you; but this I know, that no Christian minister will ever be able to enter into the trials and experiences of God's people unless he has stood foot to foot with the arch fiend, and wrestled with the prince of hell. Martin Luther was right when he said that temptation and adversity were the two best books in his library. He had never written his commentary upon Galatians if he had not been one who was frequently tempted and tossed about by Satan. That fiery, vehement nature of his was like a great coal fire burning up the works of Satan, and all that Satan could do only stirred up the flame and caused it to burn more brightly. Satan will suggest not merely little sins, but the worst and foulest of sins to the best of God's chosen people. He will even venture, in his baseness, to urge the man of God to destroy himself when under depression of spirits. And although the saint hates the very thought, yet he may be driven to the verge of it by an influence which he feels that all his puny might is unable to resist. It is a fearful thing to fight with Apollyon. We shall sing of it in heaven as one of the greatest and most marvelous mercies of God, that, "He delivered us out of the mouth of our cruel adversary."

2. *Why is it that believers are allowed to fall into it?* The answer is they sometimes get into it *through their own sin*. It is a chastisement upon them. They were not faithful enough when they walked in the light of God, and therefore, they are put into the darkness. If they had minded their steps when they were going down the hill, they would not have been subject to such afflictions in the valley. Rest assured that a great many of our sorrows are the foul weeds which spring up from the seeds of our own sins. If you had been a fruitful tree, the pruning knife would not have been so often used. The rod is never taken



down from the shelf, except when it is absolutely needed; and we are made to smart bitterly under it because we so greatly require it. God does not punish in a penal sense, but He does chastise; and He generally does it by permitting us to be filled with our own ways. We have to drink the powder of the idol calf which we have, ourselves, set up. We had need to walk with holy jealousy, for we serve a jealous God. O for grace to serve Him well!

Our heavenly Father sends these troubles, or permits them to come, *to try our faith*. If our faith is worth anything at all, it will stand the test. Superficial brilliance is always afraid of fire, but gold is not—the paste gem dreads to be touched by the diamond, but the true diamond fears no test. People who have a kind of confectionery godliness will wish to be preserved from temptations, for they cannot endure them, but the Christian counts it all joy when he falls into different trials, knowing that, “Tribulation works patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” My dear friends, if your faith is only a sunshiny faith, get rid of it, for you may not have many bright days between this and heaven. If your godliness can only walk with Christ when it wears silver slippers, you had better give it up, for Christ very often walks barefoot. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable. That is true faith which holds by the Lord’s faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when our spirits are depressed, when we are driven from the enjoyment of assurances into the desert land, and cannot see the light of our Father’s countenance. A faith that can say in the midst of the direst trouble, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”—this is heaven-born faith indeed! I believe in my Lord, by His grace,

because He is God who cannot lie, faithful and true to His every word, and therefore, let the whole creation go to rack and ruin, my faith shall not waver or give up its confidence.

The Lord may also let His servants slip into the deep mire *to glorify Himself*, for He is never, perhaps, more glorified than in the faith of His own people. When an architect has erected a bridge of whose enormous strength he is well satisfied, he has no objection that it shall be put to any test. “No,” he says, “let the heaviest train pass over it which has ever been dragged by a locomotive; let the most terrible tempest come that has ever blown from the four winds; I have built my structure in a manner so substantial, that the more it is tried and proved, the more you will admire its firmness and completeness. So our gracious God, beloved, glorifies Himself by permitting His people to be subjected to trials, and by enabling them to endure the strain. We would never know the music of the harp if the strings were left untouched; we would never enjoy the juice of the grape if it were never trod in the winepress; we would never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed and beaten; and we would never know the warmth of fire if the coals were not utterly consumed. The excellence of the Christian is brought out by the fire of trouble. The wisdom of the Great Workman, and the glory of His skill and power are discovered by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Again, beloved, trials are permitted *to show the natural weakness of the creature*, that no flesh may glory in the presence of God. Men of iron nerve are raised up to face all opposition, and confront the powers of darkness; their testimony never falters, their course is true and bright as the sun in the heavens, and men rejoice in their light. With faith undaunted they confront the infernal lion in his den, and in the day of battle seek the thickest of the fight. All the devils in hell cannot

frighten them, and all the foes upon earth cannot stir them from their divine purpose. They win souls as many as the sands of the sea, and their spiritual children are for number, like gravel. They revive the flame which lingers in the embers of the Church; they set the world on a blaze with heavenly fire; they comfort many, and set free thousands of prisoners, and yet, suddenly, and it may be in the last hour, their joy departs, their assurance flees, and their confidence departs. May not this be necessary that men may not trace the champion's noble bearing to the strength of his natural constitution, but discern that the eternal God was the support of his faith? We might have dreamed that the successful warrior was something different from other men—but when he is brought low, we discern clearly that it was distinguishing *grace* rather than a distinguished *man* which is to be seen and wondered at. The man was but an earthen vessel in which God had put His precious treasure, and He makes the earthiness of the vessel manifest, that all men may see that the excellency of the power is not of us, but of God!

There is, perhaps, another reason why God permits His people to sink for a time into deep depression, and that is *to make heaven sweeter when they enter its pearly gates*. There must be some shades in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven if we had not known the curse of sin, and the sorrow of earth? Rest, rest, rest! In whose ear does that sound most sweet? Not in the ears of the loiterers who scorn all knowledge of the word “toil,” but in the ears of those who are exhausted and fatigued by the labors of the day. Peace! Is there a man in England who knows the blessedness of that word “peace”? Yes, there are some. The soldier knows it. He has heard the whiz of the bullet. He has seen the smoke of the battle, and the garment stained with blood, and his heart has been stirred by the din, and the shrieks,

and the death of the field of fight. To him, peace is a peerless gift. Who will know the peace of heaven but those who have experienced the warfare of earth, and have endured conflicts with sin and the prince of the power of the air? Beloved, there must be the foil of sorrow to bring out the bright sparkling of the diamond of glory. The happiest moments of mere physical pleasure, I can remember, have been just after a long illness, or some acute pain. When pain is lulled to sleep, how happy one is! I saw a brother, the other day, affected by the most painful of all bodily complaints. He was telling me of the sufferings he had endured, and he said, “I am so happy now it is all over.” And I suppose, my beloved, that heaven will derive some of its excess of delights—its overflowing joy—from the contrast with the pain, and misery, and conflict, and suffering which we have had to pass through here below. There will be something better to talk about than troubles in heaven, but the recollection of them may afford a flavor to our happiness which it would have lacked without it. We shall, I doubt not, “With transporting joys, recount the labors of our feet.”

3. These are some of the reasons why God permits His people to sink, for a while, in the deep mire where there is no standing. But the question is raised, “*Are these men who are thus tossed about by doubts and vexed with the great depravity of their hearts, truly at that time God’s people?*” Certainly they are; for *if they were not God’s people, the pain of the temptation which they endure could not have reached them.* This spot is the spot of God’s children, and no others are marked with it. The man who lives in sin as his element, never feels the weight of it. A fish may be deep in the sea with thousands of tons of water rolling over his head, but it does not feel the load; but, if a man has only a bucketful of water to carry upon his head, he feels the weight of it, and rejoices to lose his burden. The sinner whose element is sin, laughs at the weight by which a believer is borne down.

Conflicts and pains, such as I have been speaking of, are not possible to those destitute of spiritual life. Spiritual life is the first requisite for spiritual grief and spiritual contrition. Depend upon it, beloved, that those who suffer as I have described, are the children of God, *for they show it*. They show it by the way in which they bear their trials; for in their worst times, there is always a clear distinction which marks them as separate from other men. If they cannot shout, “Victory,” they bear patiently. If they cannot sing unto God with their mouth, yet their hearts bless Him. There is a degree of light even in their worst darkness—it never becomes Egyptian darkness—some one star, at least, gilds the gloom. In the blackest night, there is still a candle somewhere or other for the Lord’s chosen. If they get into the mire, they do not perish there; they cry for help when their woes surround them, and in the very nick of time, when everything appears to be lost, their heavenly Father hastens to their aid.

*It is well known* to the students of Christian biography, *that the most eminent of God’s saints have had to pass through trials similar to those which we have been describing*. Luther was a man of the strongest faith, and yet at times, of the faintest hope. He was, and he was not, a firm believer. His faith never wavered as to the truth of the cause which he advocated, but his faith as to his own interest in Christ, seldom, if ever, amounted to full assurance. The force of his faith spent itself in carrying on with fearful vigor the war against antichrist and error of all shapes. He believed the truth of God, and held right manfully justification by faith; but he was, at times, very doubtful as to whether he, himself, was justified in Christ Jesus. He believed in salvation by the precious blood of Christ; but, especially at the last, it became a very serious matter with him as to whether *he* had ever been washed in that precious blood. Roman Catholic biographers—who, of course, if they can, will slander

him—say that he had doubts as to everything which he preached, and that at the last he found his faith was not in accordance with the truth of God. Not so! No man stuck to his testimony with more tenacity than the great Reformer; but yet I marvel not that they should say so. He never doubted the truth of the things which he preached, but he did doubt his own interest in them frequently; and when he came to die, his testimony, though amply sufficient, was nothing like so brilliant as that of many a poor old woman who has died in a humble cottage, resting upon Jesus. The poor peasant who knew no more than her Bible was true, was utterly unknown to the Vatican, and fame's trumpet will never resound her name, but yet she entered into eternal peace with far louder shouting of joy than Martin Luther, who shook the world with his thundering valor.

“Here lies he that never feared the face of man,” is a most proper epitaph for John Knox; and yet at the last, for some hours, he passed through fearful temptation. And what do you suppose it was? The temptation of self-righteousness! The devil could not charge him with sin, for Knox's life had been so straightforward and honest, that no man could impugn his motives or deny his Christianity; and therefore, the devil came to him in another and more crafty way. He whispered, “John Knox, you have deserved well of your Master! You will get to heaven well enough through your own merits.” It was as hard a struggle as the lion-hearted soldier of the cross had ever encountered—to hold to his simple faith in Jesus Christ in his hour of peril. Now, no Christian denies that Luther and Knox were men of faith; and yet they were men who had to pray, “Deliver me out of the mire.” I know as I look around on this congregation, that some of you can heartily sympathize in the truth before us; but if there are no others here who can, I can, by God's grace, most thoroughly say, “I know whom I have

believed; and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.” But I know, also, that the Christian life is one of stern conflict and battle; and though we do rejoice in the Lord always, yet there are times when it is as hard a work as we can possibly do. No, *harder* work than we can accomplish without the help of the eternal Spirit—to keep our faith alive at all—for our souls are brought almost to death’s door. I wished to enlarge on this matter for the comfort of those who are tossed to and fro by doubts and fears. I have been attempting to describe the case of those who, for the greater part of their lives have lived in the shade, and seen but little of the light of God’s countenance. O may the sun shine on them yet with cheering rays!

**II.** I turn very briefly to the second point—**WHEN BELIEVERS ARE IN SUCH A STATE, THEY KNOW EXPERIENTIALLY THAT NO ONE CAN DELIVER THEM BUT THEIR GOD.**

*The Word of God* itself, if not laid home by the divine Spirit, cannot help them. You may possibly be in such a condition that every promise scowls at you, as though it were transformed into a threat. When you turn over the pages of the Book, once so full of comfort to you, it seems withered into a howling wilderness. Even those promises, which you have been accustomed to offer to others in their time of need, appear to shut their doors against you. “No admittance here,” says one promise. Unbelief puts its burning finger right across another. Past sin accuses you, and cries, “You cannot claim this Word, for your transgression has forfeited it.” So you may look through the whole Bible, and find nothing upon which your souls may rest. You have noticed strong posts by the sides of rivers to which ships may be safely moored. To get the rope fairly round one of the promises of God will yield good enough moorings for a Christian—but there are times, when we have

great difficulty in getting the rope round so as to hold fast. The fault is not in the *promise*, but in us. At such seasons, the *preaching of the gospel* is apparently without power. You say to yourselves, “I do not know how it is, but I do not profit by the ministry as I once did. It used to make me leap for joy when I heard of the precious things of God, but I come away uncomforted from that table which once furnished me a feast of consolation.” It is not the fault of the minister—he still, as a good steward, brings forth things new and old. It is not the fault of the Word—it is still milk for babes, and strong meat for full-grown men—but you painfully feel that you are changed, for you lament in words like these, “I go where others go, and find no comfort there.” This is a case in which the Holy Spirit must Himself exercise His comforting office. It is only by the effectual application of the Word to your heart by the Holy Spirit that you can be brought out of this deep mire.

At such times, *other believers cannot aid you*. Those about you can prove to you how foolish it is to be in such a state, and you can even see your folly for yourself, yet you lie there helpless to lift hand or foot. They tell you of the faithfulness of God; they remind you of the glorious future, and point to the land beyond the skies; but you only sigh, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest, for there is no rest for me beneath the sky.” Human sympathy is bewildered and all we can do is to weep with you, for we cannot dry your tears. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because you have been living without Him, and now He is going to take away everything upon which you have been in the habit of depending. Another reason may be that He wishes to drive you to Himself. Oh, it is a blessed thing to live in the fountainhead! While our skin bottles are full, we are content like Hagar and Ishmael to go into the wilderness, but when those are dry, nothing will serve us but, “You God see me.” We must then



come to the well. We are like the prodigal, we love the swine troughs, and forget our father's house. Remember, we can make swine troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion. Do not misunderstand me. They are blessed things, but we may put them in God's place, and then, they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God! Even the bronze serpent is to be despised as Nehustan, a mere piece of brass, if I worship *it* instead of *God*.

The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. And, brethren, I think our Lord favors us with a famine in the land, that it may make us seek after the Savior more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God's grace. The best position is still to be where he was at first, "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Not building a wooden house on the rock, piling it higher and higher with our own wood, and then getting up to the top and saying, "How high I am!" but having no wood at all—just keeping down on the bare, solid rock—this is wisdom! When the wind comes, and the storm blows, we shall see that the structures which we build will give way and fall to our own damage. But if we stand on the Rock, which never shakes, we cannot suffer loss. I pray God that you and I may never get beyond the fountain filled with blood. Stand there, brethren, and be happy! Sinners blood-washed, sinners pleading, sinners accepted, we pray to always feel ourselves to be. Never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings—but know that because Christ on Calvary offered a full, free, efficacious atonement for everyone who believes on Him, therefore, we are saved; for we are complete in Him, having nothing of our own to trust, but resting upon the merits of Him, whose passion and whose life furnish for us the only sure ground of

confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to this, then it is that God comes to help us. We are sure in our poverty to turn to Him afresh with new earnestness. Infants, when they are among strangers, are pleased with little toys and amusements, but when they become hungry, nothing will do for them but their mother's breast. So it is with a child of God—he may for a time be satisfied and find pleasure in the things of this world—but he only finds lasting and *sure* happiness in being embraced in his Father's arms.

When the boys walk out with us in fair weather, they will run in front of us ever so far, but as soon as they see any danger in the way, they quickly return to father's side; so when everything goes well with us, we frequently run a long way from God, but as soon as we are overtaken by trouble, or see a lion in the way, we fly to our heavenly Father. I bless God for the mire, and for my sinking in it, when it makes me cry out, "Deliver me, oh my God, out of the deep mire, and let me not sink."

**III.** In the last place, our text shows us that **PRAYER IS THE NEVER-FAILING RESORT OF THE CHRISTIAN** in any case, in every plight.

When you cannot use your sword, you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bowstring may be relaxed, and your sword may be rusty, your spear may be bent—but the weapon of all-prayer is never out of order! Men have to sharpen the sword and the spear, but prayer never rusts. There is this blessed thing about prayer—it is a door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but there is always one way open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hands. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succor can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the times of our need. Prayer is never forbidden.

Remember, Christian, it is never wrong for you to pray, for the gates of heaven are open day and night. Your prayer is heard in heaven in the dead of the night, in the midst of your business, in the heat of noonday, or in the shades of evening. You can be in poverty, sickness, obscurity, slander, doubt, or even sin—but it is still true that your God will welcome your prayer at any time and in every place.

Again, prayer is never *futile*. True prayer is forevermore true power. You may not always get what you ask for, but you shall always have your real needs supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If you ask for silver, will you be angered because He gives you gold? If you seek bodily health, should you complain if instead He makes your sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than to have the cross removed? Was not the apostle more enriched when God allowed him to still endure the thorn in the flesh, and yet said to him, “My strength is sufficient for you”? Better to have all-sufficient grace than to have the thorn taken away. What is your condition my brother, my sister? Let me entreat you not to cease from prayer. There may be spiritual life in you, and yet the devil may tempt you to say, “I cannot pray.” But you *can* pray! You *do* pray! You *must* pray! If you have spiritual life, although you can scarcely bend your knees, and are almost afraid to utter words once dear to you, yet your soul desires, pants, hungers, thirsts—and that is the essential of prayer—that is the very marrow and essence of prayer. Sobs and looks are prayers; and though you say you cannot pray, you must pray, you cannot help praying if you are a Christian. “I cannot breathe”—that might be true in a certain sense; I cannot, perhaps, breathe under an asthmatic affection without great difficulty and much pain, but I *must* breathe if I live; and so with you. You must breathe if you live; and you do pray, *must* pray,

if you are truly a child of God. At any rate, I pray by the power of God, the Holy Spirit, you may break through those evils, those nets of the devil which hold you in bondage, and begin with your whole soul to pray. Never mind what form your prayer takes, but pray.

My dear brethren, everything depends now upon your prayer. If Satan can stop your prayer, he has stripped you of your last resort, your last hope. He will take you by storm if you leave off praying. Pray, if it costs you your life, pray! Go not to your ease and take not your rest until you have prayed. Give no sleep to your eyes till you have prayed. Slumber not until you have had dealings with God in prayer. Not pray? Are you willing to be damned? Not pray? Are you willing to make your bed in hell? Not pray? Shall devils be your companions? Shall heaven's gate be shut against you? Not pray? Why, my brethren, you *must* pray *now*! Oh, send up the prayer from the very bottom of your heart—"O God, deliver me out of the deep mire, and let me not sink. Save me, oh, my God! God be merciful to me a sinner." May God the Holy Spirit sweetly compel you to pray! May He incline, guide, direct, and instruct you *how* to pray, that this very night you may offer up a prayer which God in His great goodness will hear and answer!

Pray—"Lord, my soul is besieged. I am shut up by my sins. Oh, God, raise the siege, and deliver me from the enemy. Lord, help me with Your almighty arm. Make my extremity Your opportunity. I am a foul beggar sitting on a dunghill. Lord, come and lift me up, and put me among the princes, and I will praise Your name forever and ever." May the blessed virgin's song be yours. "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble and meek; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." And may you find in the goodness, and mercy, and loving kindness of God, a speedy deliverance out of the deep mire, that you

may not sink! May God give a blessing to these words to your comfort! I know some of you will say, “I am not in such a state.” Thank God that you are not! Be grateful for your mercies lest you lose them. Be thankful for your full assurance, and your comfortable hope, lest those favors should become dim, like dying tapers and waning moons. Rejoice now, oh Christian, as the young man does in his youth, and let your heart cheer you in your youthful joy; but remember, if you are not careful how you walk in these flowery paths, if you become too confident in your own strength or goodness, God will bring you down, and make you cry out as sharply and as sorrowfully as David—“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”

## 632 CONSIDER BEFORE YOU FIGHT – LUKE 14:31-32

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“What king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first, and consults whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.” — Luke 14:31-32

EVERY SENSIBLE MAN endeavors to adapt his purposes to his strengths. He does not begin to build a house which he will not be able to finish, nor commence a war which he cannot hope to fight through. The religion of Christ is the most reasonable one in the world, and Jesus Christ never desires to have any disciples who shall blindly follow Him without counting the cost. We always esteem it to be a happy thing when we can get men to sit down and consider. The most of you are so full of other thoughts, and so occupied with the world—always running here and there about your ordinary business—that we cannot get you to think, or calmly sit down, and soberly look at things in the light of eternity, and weigh them deliberately as you ought. And yet it is only reasonable that the Master should ask you to do for Him, with regard to your spiritual matters, what you will admit that every sensible man does continually in his business; you are poor traders if

you never count your stock; you are likely to be, before long, in bankruptcy court if there is no periodical examination of accounts. And so Christ would have you sit down, sometimes, and take stock as to where you are, and what you are, and then figure up by some sort of arithmetic by which you may come to a truthful calculation, what you are able to do, and not to do, and what, therefore, it is reasonable and unreasonable for you to undertake, and where your position ought, and where it ought not to be.

I especially invite, this evening, those who are unconverted in this assembly to some few thoughts upon the war in which they are engaged with God, hoping that perhaps if they consider a little upon it, they will send a delegation and ask for peace. When I have spoken upon that, there will be some, perhaps, who will be running away with the idea that they will at once be at peace with God, and make war with Satan; but I shall want to pin them down a moment, and make them estimate their chances of victory in such a war as that, and see whether they are able to meet the Black Prince of Darkness in their own strength. We will try, if we can, to make it tonight the subject of a little homely talk about our souls, and a little earnest personal consideration about our future.

**I.** First, then, **THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO ARE NOT THE FRIENDS OF GOD**, and in this case, he that is not with Him is against Him.

If you cannot look up to God and say, “My Father,” and feel that your heart beats true to Him, then remember it is a fact that you are His enemy. If you could have what you wish, there would be no God. If it were in your power, you would never trouble yourself again with thoughts of Him. You would like to live, you say, as you wish, and I know how you would wish to live. It would be anyway but as God commands. Now, as you are engaged in antagonism with Him, just think awhile—

can you expect to succeed? Are you likely to win the day? You have entered into a conflict with His law—you do not intend to keep it; with His day, you do not regard it. You are thus at war with God! Now, is it likely that you will be successful? Is there a chance for you? If there is, why then, perhaps, it may be as well to go on. If you can conquer *GOD*, if the battlements of glory may yet see the flag of sin waved triumphant there, why, Man, then try it! There will be at least an ambition worthy of Satan, who desired sooner to reign in hell than to be ruled by heaven! But is there any hope for *you*? Let me put a few things before you which may perhaps, make you think the conflict too unequal, and thus lead you to abandon the thought at once.

Think of God's *stupendous power*! What is there which He cannot do? We see but little of God's power comparatively in our land. Now and then there comes a crash of thunder in a storm, and we look up with amazement when He sets the heavens on blaze with His lightning. But go, and do business on the deep waters; let your vessel fly before the howling hurricane; mark how every staunch timber seems to crack as though it were but match board, and the steady mast goes by the board, and snaps, and is broken to shivers. Mark what God does when He stirs up the great deep, and seems to bring heaven down, and lift the earth up, till the elements mingle in a common mass of tempest! Then go to the Alps, and listen to the thunder of the avalanche; stand amazed as you look down some grim precipice, or peer with awe-struck wonder into the blue mysteries of a crevasse! See the leaping waterfalls, and mark those frozen seas, the glaciers, as they come sweeping down the mountainside. Stay awhile till a storm shall gather there, and Alp shall talk to Alp, and those white prophetic heads shall seem to bow while the wings of tempest cover them—there you may learn something of the power of God,



amidst the crash of nature. If you could have stood by the side of Dr. Woolfe, when rising early one morning, he went out of Aleppo, and upon turning his head saw that Aleppo was no more! It had been, in a single moment, swallowed up by an earthquake, then again you might see what God can do. But why need I feebly recapitulate what you all know so well? Think of what that book records of His deeds of prowess when He unloosed the depths, and bade the fountains of the great deep be broken up—and the whole world that then was—was covered with water! Think of what He did at the Red Sea, when the depths stood upright as a heap for a time, while His people went through, and when afterwards, with eager joy, the floods clasped their hands and buried His enemies in the deep, never to rise again! Let such names as Og, king of Bashan, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Sennacherib, the mighty, rise before your recollection, and mark what God has done! Who has ever dashed upon the points of His buckler without being wounded? What iron has He not broken? What spear has He not shivered?

Millions came against Him, but by the blast of the breath of His nostrils they fell, or they flew like the chaff before the wind! Let the sea roar, but the rocks stand still, and hurl off the waves in flakes of foam—and so does God when His foes are most enraged and passionate. He who sits in the heavens does laugh; the Lord does have them in derision, and He breaks them in pieces *without* a stroke of His hand or even the glance of His eyes. Think, sinner! Think of Him with whom you contend! Have you an arm like God's? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Can you stamp with your foot and shake the mountains? Can you touch the hills and make them smoke? Can you say to the sea, "Be stirred to your depths," or can you call to the winds, and bid the steeds of tempest be unloosed? If you cannot, then think of the battle! Attempt to do no more, but get back to your bed and there commune with your heart,

and make your peace with Him, against whom you can not hope to contend successfully.

Think, again, O rebellious man—you have to deal not only with almighty, but with an ever *encompassing power*! Please think how much you are in God's power tonight as it regards your temporal position. You are prospering in business—but the tide of prosperity may be turned in a way unknown to you. God has a thousand ways of stripping those whom He before seemed to clothe most lavishly. You dote upon that wife of yours—she may be struck before your eyes, and waste with consumption or decline, or, more rapidly still, she may be taken from you at a stroke! And then where is your joy? Those children, those happy prattlers who make your hearth glad—could you hold them for a moment if God should call back their spirits? If He said, “Return, children of men,” your prayers, the physician, your love—what could all these avail you? You have but to buy the coffin, and the shroud, and the grave, and bury your dead out of your sight. God can sweep away all if He wills, and leave you penniless, childless, a widower, without comfort in the world. I would not contend with Him who has so many ways to wound me! I am vulnerable at so many points, and He knows how to pierce me to the quick in them all.

I will, therefore, make Him my friend rather than my foe. I had better not fight with Him who has the key of the castle, and of the front gate, and of the iron gate, and who can storm every position along my bastion whenever He shall please.

Think, again, how much you are personally in His hands! You are strong, you say; you will do a day's work with any man; there are few can lift a load more readily than you can perhaps, and yet one second would be enough to paralyze every limb. Your faculties are clear; you can write with clearness—no one can see through an intricate account more rapidly than you can, or find out a secret more speedily; and yet one tick of that clock

is time enough to reduce either you or me to a driveling idiot, or to a raving madman. A mysterious hand falls on that brain, and cools it so that there is no longer the light of intellect within it—or else an awful breath fans its flame till it burns like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and the soul walks within it a martyr—doomed to live in the midst of fire! Think of this—not many yards from here there stands in Bedlam an awful proof of what the providence of God can do in one moment with those who seemed the most sane, the most witty, and the most able of men; and you have not to go far in either direction, before at the gate of some hospital, you will find how soon the body may become very, very low, even to the dust, if God but wills it. I would not, O sinner, I would not have God other than my friend, while I am thus helplessly in His control! If the moth is in my hand, and I can crush it at my will and pleasure, surely if that moth had wit and sense, it would not provoke me to anger nor seek to bring down my plagues upon it! But, if it could, it would seek to nestle near my heart that I, so able to crush it, might use my power for its *protection*, and might make what wit I have to be its wisdom for its shelter and defense.

It is well, also, to remember the *mighty army* of the Lord of hosts, and that you live amidst the creatures of God who are all ready to do His bidding. As the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, they were preserved by God from many foes and innumerable dangers, which lurked around waiting to destroy them. Once God gave the fiery serpents permission to assault the host, and what death and terror immediately filled the camp; they must have seen, then, that it was no small thing to be at variance with God, when He had so many allies waiting to do His bidding. How clearly this was shown in the plagues of Egypt, when frogs, locusts and lice, hail and fire, plague and death, flooded the ill-fated land—but only when beckoned on by the uplifted finger of God! He can still call to His help the

forces of creation. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and God can still make all things work for *evil* as well as good if He is pleased to command them. When Herod fought with God, he was consumed by worms and died—and God has still a countless army of servants who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. You had better wait awhile, and think how you can meet them. Are your friends as numerous? Can you muster an army like God's? Is the muster roll of your hosts like His? Consider the heavens, for He marshals yon starry multitude, and calls them all by name! Because He is great in strength, not one fails. Be wise, and enter into covenant with Him through blood, and rush not on to certain defeat by seeking to outrival God.

Remember, moreover, what is the extent of *God's wisdom*, and that His foolishness is greater than your highest knowledge. A good general is worth more than a regiment of men. When Stonewall Jackson was killed, his enemies and friends alike felt that his death was more than the loss of ten thousand men. Our Iron Duke, when alive, was strength to our army beyond all calculation. Now mark the skill and infinite wisdom of the God who leads the army of the skies. All light and knowledge are His; He is the Ancient of Days, and His experience runs back to all eternity. You are but of yesterday, and know nothing. His plans are beyond your conception, and He knows the way you take. He is far above your thoughts and ever out of your sight—but He can see you through and through, and knows you better than you know yourself. Do not show your folly by weighing your wisdom against His in the scales, or by expecting to outshine Him so as to triumph over Him. Poor moth rushing into the flame, you will be consumed amidst the pity of good men and the derision of evil ones.

Yet there is another matter I want you to remember—you who are the enemies of God—you have a *conscience*. You have

not got rid of it yet. You have a thief in that candle of the Lord, it is true, but still it is a light. It is not put out; and God has ways of making it to become a terrible plague to you, if you do not accept it as a friend. Conscience is meant to be man's armor bearer, beneath whose shield he may fight the battles of the right. But if you make it your *enemy*, then conscience often places a sword in such a way as to cut and wound you severely. You have a conscience, and that is a very awkward thing for a man to have who is an enemy of God. If I were God's enemy, I would prefer having no monitor to call my attention to the holy character and righteous law of the Most High. I would be glad to get rid of every particle of moral sense. But you have consciences, and most of you are not yet dead to all feeling of guilt and shame. You cannot, therefore, sin so cheaply as others, and if you do for the present manage to put Mr. Conscience down, yet since he is still in you, the time will come when you will find his voice grow louder, and there will be a terror in that voice, which will make it a terror for you to sleep, and hard for you to go about your daily business with your accustomed regularity. Those men, who serve God most faithfully, find that their conscience, when it can accuse them of anything wrong—though it is their best friend—is no very pleasant companion. It is said that David's heart smote him. I would sooner have anybody smite me than my own *heart*, for it strikes with so hard a blow, and hits the place where one may most tenderly feel it. And it will be so with you, unless you get your "conscience seared with a hot iron." I am afraid there will come a time when you will not rest in your beds, nor be able to find peace or satisfaction anywhere. I think therefore, if I had a friend of God inside my heart, I would not like to fight with God as long as he continued within me. Oh, that you would be at peace with Him, "and thereby good shall come unto you."

One other reflection, for I must not keep you thinking on this point long. It is this, remember *you must die*, and therefore, it is a pity to be at enmity with God. You may put it off, and say, “I shall not die yet.” But you do not know. How can you tell? It is possible that you may die tomorrow. But suppose that you live for the next 20 or 30 years? What is that? I am only 30 years of age, and yet I confess that I never thought time so short, as I feel it to be now. When we were children, we thought 12 months was a great length of time; when we were twenty, a year seemed to be a very respectable period; but now it flies, and some of my friends here whose hair is turning gray, will tell you that whether it is fifty, sixty, or seventy years, it all seems but a mere dream—a snap of the fingers—it is gone so soon! Well, just push through a little interval of time, then you must die. My dear friend, will it not be a very dreadful thing to die, when you are at war with God? If you could fight this out forever under such circumstances as those in which you now are, I could not then commend the struggle, but since it must come to such an awful pause, since there must be that death rattle in your throat, since there must be that clammy sweat upon your brow—O you will need some better business, than to be carrying arms against the God of heaven in your dying moments! They, who have God for their friend, yet find death no very pleasant task, but what will *you* find it, who will have to strike yourselves in every blow that you are aiming against the Most High, whom you have made and continue to make your enemy?

Here is this, too, to think of—there is a *future state*. When you die, you have to live again! We know very little about that next state, and I do not intend to say much about it tonight. You are launched without your body, an unclothed spirit, into a world which you have never seen. Will you find companions there, or will you be alone? Where will it be? What sort of place

will it be like? I would not choose to enter upon the realm of spirits without having God to be my friend. It would be a dreadful thing to get into that mysterious unknown country, having nothing to take with me across its boundary except this—an inveterate enmity to the King who reigns supreme in it! If I must cross the border, and go into a land I have never trod, I would like at least, to carry a passport with me—or to be able to say, “I am a friend of the King who reigns here.” But to go there as God’s *enemy*—how terrible it must be!

Besides, let me say, you cannot hope to succeed—*all experience is against you*; there never was one yet that either in this state or the next, has fought with God, and conquered. And you will not be the first, for they who contend with God all come to this one conclusion—“He comes forth in His strength, and His enemies are given like stubble to the fire, and like wax to the flame: He lifts up His voice, and they melt away: He looks at them, and that one flash of fire withers them forever, and out of the bottomless pit of despair they weep, and wail the piteous but useless regret, that their harvest is past, and their summer is ended, and they are not saved; for they have spent their strength against their God, and so have brought themselves where ruin is eternal, and hope can never come.” Oh that you would send a delegation, and be at peace!

I think I hear some say, “Well, we wish to give up the contest; but what is to be done so as to be at peace with God?” I ask, “Have you got an ambassador to go to God for you?” That is the first thing. He cannot look at *you*. Jesus Christ is the ambassador between God and man—can you commit your case into His hands? Will you do so? If so, your case will go well. God cannot deny Him any request; He has a right to all He ever asks the Father to give, and the Father is always well-pleased in Him, and delights to grant Him whatever He desires. That Savior is willing to plead your cause. He waits to be

gracious. I am sent to tell you the good news of His love and mercy—to warn you of the certain doom which awaits all who turn from Christ; and to bid you and every sin-sick rebel to come at once, just as you are, to the footstool of mercy. And I can pledge the honor of God, (as being Christ’s ambassador for this purpose), that if you come, He will in no wise cast you out! And the terms of peace are very brief. They are these—*give up the traitors*; there can be no peace between you and God while you harbor sin. Give them up, and be willing to renounce every sin of every sort and kind, for one harbored traitor will prevent God concluding peace with you.

Sinner, what do you say? Is it hard to give up your sin? Does that condition strike you as unreasonable? Out with the knife, man, and cut the throat of every iniquity! Why, there is no sin for which it is worth your while to be damned; a little rioting, and chambering, and wantonness—is that worth hell fire forever? What? To have your giddy amusements for an hour or two—is this due recompense for an eternity of fire, unmitigated by a drop of water? I pray you, be reasonable; barter not away your soul for trifles; pawn not eternity for the mere fictions of an instant. God give you grace, sinner, to not kick at that condition, but at once cast out your enemies and gods, and then *lay hold on Christ*, on Jesus Christ alone, and let Him stand as ambassador for you. You cannot fight it out. Let peace be made. Oh may it be made tonight, through the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son.

Then next, *confess* that you deserve the King’s wrath. Bow that head—put the rope about your neck as though you felt you deserved that the executioner should lead you forth. *Pray to God* for pardon, and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” And then cling to the skirts of that appointed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who on yonder bloody tree made expiation for the sins of God’s enemies, that they might thereby become God’s



friends. God demands of you a confession of your guilt; He will be honored by your humbling yourself before Him. Your sin has aimed at His glory, and now He will glorify Himself by your repentance. It were only just on His part if He spurned you away, and cast you out into the pit which has no bottom, but He has said that whoever confesses his sin shall obtain forgiveness. Go, therefore, in the spirit of the publican—smite upon your breast, and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Confess that you deserve hell, but ask for heaven, and you shall not plead in vain. Only honor God’s justice, and appeal to His mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. This, surely, is not much for God to expect at your hands. If you will not submit, what can you say when God shall crush you? You refuse to bend the knee and to bow the head—what will you do when God shall trample on you in His fury, and tread on you in His hot displeasure? You must, therefore, now in the accepted time, while it is still the day of mercy, seek His face, and with weeping and supplication, “take with you words and turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

**II.** And now, we turn the subject, so as to look at **THE SECOND CONTEST, IN WHICH I TRUST MANY ARE ANXIOUS TO BE ENGAGED.**

Some young spirit who has been touched with a sense of his own condition, and somewhat awakened, may be saying, “I will be God’s enemy no longer—I will be His friend.” Bowing the knee, that heart cries, “Oh God, reconcile me unto Yourself by the death of Your dear Son. I throw down all my weapons; I confess my guilt; I plead for mercy. For Jesus’ sake vouchsafe it to me.” “But,” says that soul, “if I am the friend of God, I must be the foe of Satan, and from this day, I pledge myself to fight forever with Satan till I get the victory, and am free from sin.” My dear friend, I want you to stop. I do not wish you to

make *peace* with the evil one, but I want you to consider what you are doing. There are a few things I would whisper in your ear, and one is that *sin is sweet*. The uppermost drops of sin's cup glitter and sparkle; there is pleasure in sin of a certain sort, and for a certain season. It is a *poisoned* sweet—it is but a temporary delusion—but still, the world does promise fair things. Its gingerbread is gilt, and though it wears nothing but tinsel, and a little gold-leaf now and then, yet it does look very much like gold. Can you? Can you resist sin, when it seems so charming? The next time the cup is brought to you—you know the flavor of it—oh, it is rich! Can you turn away? Are you certain that you will be able to dash it from your lips? Ah, man, you will find it different, when the trial comes, to what it is now that you are sitting in the Tabernacle, and resolving to get rid of the temptation, that you will do right!

Remember, again, you may be *enticed by friends* who will be very persuasive. You can give up sin just now, but you do not know who may be the tempter at some future time. If *she* should allure you, who has tempted so well before! If *he—he* should speak! He! The very word has awakened your recollection—if he should speak as he alone can speak, and look as only he can look—can you then resist, and stand back? That witching voice, that fascinating eye! Oh how many souls have been damned for what men call love! Oh that they had but a little *true* love of themselves and others, and would not thus pander to the prince of hell! But alas, alas, while the cup itself looks sweet, there is to be added to it the hand that holds it out. It is not easy to contend with Satan when he employs the service of someone whom you esteem highly, and love with all your heart. Remember the case of Solomon whose wisdom was marvelous, but who was enticed by his wives, and fell a prey into the hands of the evil one. It needs a spirit like the Master's to be able to say, "Get you behind me, Satan," to the tempter,

when he has the appearance of one of your best loved friends. The devil is a crafty being, and if he cannot force the door, he will try and get the key which fits the lock, and, by the means of our most tender love and affections, will make a way for himself into our hearts! You will find it no easy task, therefore, to contend with him.

Then again, remember, man, there is *habit*. Can you, all of a sudden, give up your sins, and fight Satan? Do not tell me that you can! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. If you had never sinned as you have sinned, there were not this difficulty with you; but he, who has gone day after day, and year after year, into sin, is not so easily turned from it. As well hope to make Niagara leap up instead of down, as make human nature flow back to virtue, instead of going downward to sin! You do not know yourself. Habit is an iron bond, and he that is once enveloped in it may pull and strain, but he will tear away his flesh sooner than break the links of that dread chain. We have seen men who, convinced of the error of their ways, have sought to turn from them without asking the help of God. For a time they have made some little progress in appearance, but it has only been like the retreating of the waves at the rising of the tide; their evil habits have returned upon them with a rush, and have covered them deeper than before. Read the parable of our Lord concerning the unclean spirit which went out of the man, and roamed through dry places, seeking rest but finding none. Finally it said, "I will return to the place from where I went out." It came back, and found it swept and garnished, and then took to it seven other evil spirits, more wicked than itself. So the last end of that man was worse than the first. Thus it is with those who enter upon the work of saving themselves, without looking up by faith to God for His needed help. Satan will triumph over you. You are like the

fly in the coils of the spider's web—the more it struggles, the more it will be encompassed. You must cry for help, as you are quite unable of yourself to escape from the snares of the wicked one. He has you bound fast, hand and foot—and you will never break his cords, nor be able to cast his bands from you. You have not seven locks of strength like Samson, but you will certainly be overcome.

Again, you think you will give up sin, but *ridicule* is very unpleasant, and when the finger comes to be pointed at you, and they say, “Ah, so you have set up for a saint, I see!” When they put it as only they can put it, in such a sharp, cutting, grating manner; when it is wrapped up so wittily in an epigram, that is told all round the shop against you; and when, moreover, there is some weakness of yours, some giddy weakness—and they know how to hook your attempt at saintship to your weakness—and they bandy that all round, and there are 50 laughing faces at you, can you stand that? Yes, it is a very pretty thing for you to come here on Sundays, and say what you will do—but it is different to do it on Mondays. To be laughed at is not really, to a sensible man, anything very terrible, for I think you have only to get used to it, and then you will just as much expect to hear people laugh at you, as to hear birds singing when you walk out in the morning; but at first it is a very sharp trial—a trial of “cruel mocking.” And many who have been going to fight Satan have drawn back, for they found they could not stand it. When the Jews were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after their return from captivity, one of the most severe tests of their zeal and devotion was the laughter of their enemies who came and looked on, and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Even that which they build, if a fox goes up it, he shall break down their stone wall.” The words of their foes were more cutting than swords, and keenly did they feel in their spirits the derision of the scoffers. It is as painful now for

the sensitive spirit as it was of old, but you must not be daunted. Heaven is worth buying, even though it should cost a life heaped full of stinging words and malicious sayings from a deriding and taunting world. Did not Christ Himself show us how to endure this trial? See His foes gathered around Him when He hung dying on the cross. They laugh at Him even there—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save," they said as they wagged their heads, and mocked alike His dignity and His woe. "If You are the Christ, come down from the cross, and we will believe on You." These sayings must have been bitterer to His spirit than the wormwood mingled with gall was to His lips. You must follow Christ here, also, if you would contend, as He did, with Satan. Then count the cost. Can you drink His cup, and be baptized with His baptism?

And yet further, let me say to you, you who are for going to heaven so zealously—*gain* is a very pretty thing, a very pleasant affair. Who does not like to make money? You know if you can be religious, and grow rich at the same time, that will just suit some of you! Oh yes, the two going together— that will be admirable! You will kill two birds with one stone. Mr. By-Ends said, "Now, if a man, by being religious, can get a good wife who has a considerable sum of money; and if by being religious he gets a good shop, and many customers, why," says he, "then religion is a good thing! To get a good wife is a good thing, and to get customers—that is another good thing, and so," he says, "the whole is a good thing put together." But he, who knows Mr. By-Ends, knows that he is an old rogue, notwithstanding that he puts it prettily. I have known him. He is a member of this church, I am sorry to say. I never went into a church where he was not a member. I have tried to turn him out, and did once, but there was another one of the family left inside, and however many you may expel, there are sure to be more of that breed remaining. But there sometimes comes a

pinch with Mr. By-Ends. Now, if you should find that shutting up your shop on Sundays should ruin your business, well, what then? Could you stand it? Now, there are some of you who try it every now and then, when you get spasmodically godly, but it does not pay you, you find; and so you begin once more to open shop on the Lord's Day. Some of you Sunday traders discover that it gets a little hot and strong for you, when you come to the Tabernacle occasionally, and you shut up for a season, but soon you say, "Well, people must live." Yes, and people must die, and people must be damned, too, if they try to live by breaking God's laws!

Remember that it will not pay to be religious, some people fancy. We have heard of a man saying, "I cannot afford to keep a conscience—it is too expensive an article for me." Ah, but keep in mind the saying of the Lord, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" There is such a thing as being, "penny wise, and pound foolish." And there is such a thing, also, as being, "worldly wise, and eternally foolish." Think of this, then, for the trial will come to you in the shape of yellow gold, and it will be hard to keep yourself from the glittering bait, which the god of this world will lay before you.

I am putting these things to you so that you may calculate whether you can carry on the war against the devil, with all these fearful odds against you. If I were a recruiting sergeant, I would not do this. He puts the shilling into the country lad's hand, and the lad may say 50 things. "Oh never mind," says the gallant soldier, "you know, it is all glory, nothing but glory; here, I will just tie these ribbons round your hat. There are some long strips of glory to begin with, and then all your days it will be just glory, glory forever; and you will die a general, and be buried at Westminster Abbey, and they will play the 'Dead March in Saul,' and all that kind of thing." Now I cannot thus

deceive or try to cheat men to enlist under the banner of the cross. I do not desire to raise objections to it; all I want of you is to count the cost, lest you should be like he who began to build without being able to finish. That is the misery of so many. I advise you, if you are about to declare war with Satan, to see whether you are able to carry it out, and win the victory.

“Well,” says one, “it is hard to be saved.” Nobody ever thought it was not, I hope. What does Peter say? “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” “It is hard to be saved,” you say. Whoever said it was not? But it is *not* hard to be saved if a man is willing to be received according to the plan which God has appointed! If Christ undertakes it, then it is done! My counsel to those of you who are considering making war with Satan, is to remember that it is too much for you, and therefore do not attempt it in your own strength. Beware of this. I know Satan will tempt you, first of all, to believe that you need no Savior. Then if you are not convinced of this, but are disquieted because of sin, he suggests that you can save yourself. He speaks of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus which flow close by your own door. He says, “Wash in these home streams, and be clean; stay where you are, and help yourself.” But if you listen to the words of the seducer of souls, you are lost and undone forever! Can the man born blind see to operate upon his own scale-covered eyes, so as to give himself sight? Can the crippled man run away from his lameness, and outrun the feebleness of his feet? Can the dead man exert himself to make the life-tide flow once more in his veins, and flush his cheek anew with the glow of health? Can he call back his departed spirit from the shades of the unseen world, and make it reoccupy its decaying habitation, and bid the marks of the mighty consumer be gone, and leave no trace of death’s conquest behind to remind the returning inhabitant that the palace had been occupied by the ruthless

spoiler? We answer, no. A mighty finger must touch and open the eyes. An omnipotent arm must lift up the paralyzed and impotent man into strength and power. And most evidently, if life is to be secured, the voice of God alone can speak the word which shall make the dead live.

On this point we wish to be clearly understood. You will never, of yourself, successfully resist sin so as to escape its thralldom—much less can you remove its guilt! The cancer is in your blood, and you can never get it out. The black deed is done, and it is written, “The soul that sins shall die.” Oh, then at once ask help of Him who alone can save you from the wrath to come!

Remember, poor feeble one, nothing is too hard for God, and therefore ask almighty strength to come to your rescue. It is true you cannot contend with your besetting sins—your passions, your corruptions, of whatever sort they may be, are much too strong for you. Old Adam is too mighty for you with your best intentions; but there is a Strong One, whose hands, once pierced, are always ready, and at the service of every sinner, who would have Satan cast out. There is One “mighty to save,” who can come to the rescue, and do for you what you cannot do for yourself! Oh that you had Christ tonight, so that at once you might cry to Him, “Jesus, save me! I see the fight is too great for me, I cannot drive out my sins; I cannot fight my way to heaven! Come and help me, Lord Jesus! I put myself into Your hands! Wash me in Your blood! Fill me with Your Spirit! Save me with Your great salvation, and let me be with You where You are!”

“No man can save himself,” says one. Yet the case is very much like that of the master who sent his servant with a letter. The slave was rather lazy, and came back with it. “Why did you not deliver it?” “I could not.” “Could not deliver it?” “No, Master.” “Why not?” “A deep river, sir, a very deep river, I



could not get across.” “A deep river?” he said. “Yes.” “Is not there a ferryman there?” “Do not know, sir. If there was, he was on the other side.” “Did you call across, ‘Boat, ahoy!’” “No, sir.” “Why then, you rascal,” said he, “what does it matter? It is no excuse. It is true, you could not get across the river, but then there was one there who could take you, and you never cried to him.”

And so it is in your case. You say, “I cannot save myself.” Quite true; but there is One who can, and you have never cried to Him. Mark you—if you cry to Him—if your heart says, “Oh, Savior, come and save me!” And if your spirit rests in Him—deep as that river of your sin certainly is, He knows how to bear you safely through it, and land you on the other shore. May He do that with each of you. With God all things are possible, though with man it is impossible. May the blessing of the Most High rest upon us this night, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

## 633 TWO LOVING INVITATIONS – JOHN 1:29; JOHN 21:12

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Come and see.” — John 1:39

“Come and dine.” — John 21:12

THE ONE TEXT is in the beginning, and the other at the end of John’s gospel. There is a mystery here. Here is typified a growth, which it were well for us to understand. “Come and see,” is for babes in grace—“Come and dine,” is for strong men and women in Christ Jesus. We must notice the order. “Come and see,” is the beginning of spiritual life, as it is the beginning of this gospel. “Come and dine,” is a high later-privilege of the spiritual life, and a blessed result of it. “Come and see,” is the gospel’s cry to those outside its pale. It has nothing to conceal. It wears no mask. It has no Most Holy Place into which entrance is forbidden. It has a “*sanctum sanctorum*,” but the way into it is open. Open and aboveboard in all its doings, the truth as it is in Jesus bares its bosom secrets, and cries to every passerby, “Come and see.” The seals of the book are broken, the darkness is rolled away, the vision is open, and with clarion note, the invitation is issued, “Come and see.” Romanism may conceal its worship under the Latin tongue; difficult phraseology, and polished periods may hide from the multitude the teaching of professed Protestants, but the true preacher of

Christ declares, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The shutters of every window are open, the key is put into every lock, and every door is thrown wide open. Investigation is courted upon every point—the gospel stands at her door and says, “Come in here, come and see.”

You have this short sentence, “Come and see,” as, first of all, *an encouragement to inquirers*. Many of you are like John’s disciples; they had heard John preach, and they believed his word, and when they saw Christ, to whom John pointed, they followed Him, but not *knowing* Him, they followed Him with a question upon the tip of their tongues—“Master, where do You dwell?” He said, “Come and see.” You also are anxious to know Christ; you have heard His Word preached by some of His witnesses, and you want to know Him personally for yourselves. You have a pressing question to put tonight, and Jesus encourages you to ask, no, to come, and get your own answer with your own eyes. “Come,” He says, “Come and see.”

There are three ways, I think, by which persons are to, “Come and see.” One is by *observation*. We ought to give attention to the teaching of the gospel, to weigh it and prove it. If it is found false, we are to cast it away with decision. But if it is found worthy of our attention, we are to hold it fast, and never let it go. Many persons are careless. They will consider the last new novel, or they have been clamoring to get the “*Life of Julius Caesar*,” to see what the Emperor of the French can have to say upon that subject; but concerning Christ crucified, they have no curiosity. They frequent their place of worship without feeling enough interest in the affair to ask themselves why they go. They do not expect to understand what they hear, or if they understand it, they care not whether the thing is true

or not; it is nothing to them that Jesus should die. Now, surely a theme which involves eternal consequences, a matter which deals with my immortal spirit, ought not to be put into the background, and left to careless inadvertence. I ought, at least, to give it something like the consideration which it claims at my hands. But some look at it through colored spectacles. They are prejudiced against the gospel; they observe it, they say, but their observation is tinctured by themselves, and by their own character. Some persons make up their minds as to what the gospel ought to be before they try to find out what it is; they do not come to the Bible, nor to the hearing of the Word in order to discover what the truth of God is, but they sit down, and dream, and fashion in their own minds just such a sort of concoction as they imagine gospel truth should be, and everything which is contrary to this, they will kick against, like the foolish ox which kicks against the goad. It would be no use for me, in astronomy, to make a hypothesis, and then go out with a telescope and say, "That star ought not to be where it is. According to my theory, Jupiter ought not to have moved as he has moved, and therefore, I do not believe in Jupiter, nor in the stars, for I do not like their goings on." Who but madmen talk thus? I must always shape my views to facts, and regarding the Bible as the great storehouse of facts, I must take care that I go to it with a candid and unbiased judgment. May God help me to do so. To find out what the truth of God is, "Come and see," but ask God to open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things which are written in His law.

Does anyone inquire how he can come and see in the matter of observation? We invite you, dear friends, to a *diligent reading* of Scripture as one means of seeing. The worst-read book in England is the Bible. People read a verse of it or half a chapter in the morning, and think they understand it. Suppose anyone were to read a poet in that way. Let the world's favored

poet, Shakespeare, be treated in such a style as that, and what man could ever appreciate his beauties? If you get a poet, say Cowper, you read "*The Task*" through. You do not think of snatching a line or two here and there—if you did, you would be like the Greek teacher who carried a brick about as a specimen of a house which he had for sale. If you read Young's "*Night Thoughts*," it is true that almost every line is noteworthy, and is as fine-tuned as a distinct proposition; but still, he who would appreciate the beauties of Young must read the "*Night Thoughts*" through, or, at least, read a book at a time. Yet there are thousands of you who never did read one of the gospels through, never read one of the epistles through with a studious mind, desiring to catch the drift, and to understand the sense. And do you dream you will ever know what the Bible teaches by just recalling a portion here and a portion there? Impossible! Absurd! If you have any care to, "Come and see," read the Bible in a common-sense way, and sit down with the determination that, as far as the human mind can find out what God means, you will know what He has revealed concerning His Son. I am not afraid of what the consequences will be if you do that. If, moreover, you seek the aid of the divine Spirit, your search cannot be in vain. You shall see Jesus and rejoice in His great salvation.

Then next, I earnestly desire you to *hear the gospel* as well as read it, only take care that what you hear *is* the gospel. It is very easy to find divines of flowery speech, and flowing tongue, from whom, in a course of seven years, you would probably learn nothing whatever of the doctrines of the covenant of grace. It has been said that if you were to hear a lecturer on geology or astronomy deliver some 12 or 13 lectures, you would be able to pick up a pretty clear idea of the system of geology or astronomy, which the lecturer meant to teach. But I declare and assert, and will prove it by sermons printed by

sundry authors, that you might hear 13,000 sermons of some men without knowing what system of divinity they taught, if, indeed, they have any system of divinity at all! What do you go to God's house for? Is it to have your ears tickled? Do you go to the place of worship that you may admire the eloquence of man? Go to your theater or your senate if this is your desire; such places are the legitimate arena for display— come not to God's house for that. There we should resort to learn to pray, we should come that we may, in the words of our text, "See." See ourselves, and better still, see the Lord Jesus! This should be the first inquiry as we go up the steps into the place of meeting—"Sirs, we would see Jesus," and if Jesus is not to be seen there, no matter how brilliant the display of fireworks with which the sermonizer may indulge you—that is not the proper place in which to spend the precious hours of Sunday! We would see Jesus! We would know what we must do to be saved! *Observe* then, observe carefully, keep your eyes open, not only to the world of nature, but to the Book of God, and the lives of His people, and thus, "Come and see."

Truly, inquirer, there is a better way of coming and seeing, and that is by *believing*. If you can at once believe God's Word, you shall see far better than if you are merely a seeker and surely the revelation of God in Christ may well demand your implicit faith. See how true others have found it. If the proposition is, "Can Christ forgive sin?"—hear what others say who can sing of pardon bought with blood, and of promises applied to their souls with power, breathing peace and pardon to their hearts. Do you remember your mother? Do you remember the glitter of her eyes in death's dark hour? Do you remember how she bore her dying testimony, that all that God had said concerning Christ was true? That He was able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him? She was no woman given to deception. If I remember rightly, you can say of her that she

was a common-sense, shrewd woman, not easily deceived, and yet in that last article of death—when every sham comes crumbling down, and all that is mere paint and tinsel is broken and dashed away, she found the solidity of her hopes and rejoiced in them. You have other friends. In business, they are not second-rate men; with regard to matters of common sense, you would trust them as well as any who you know; they are not hot-headed and enthusiastic, likely to be carried away by the multitude, after some hare-brained prophet. And yet steadily and solemnly, they tell you that Christ has given them new hearts, and right spirits, that He has changed their lives, that He has given them a peace and a joy they never knew before. They tell you that they have answers to prayer—that whenever they spread their case before God, their heavenly Father hears them, and sends them speedy relief; they tell you that they find in religion a spring of moral action such as was never found in the mere precepts and teachings of law and conscience. Now, believe these men. If they were the worst men in the neighborhood, if they were the felons and rogues of trade, I would recommend you *not* to believe them—but since they are the best in the world, and rank high in your esteem—at least trust them so far as to come, yourself, to a candid observation of these things, and believe that at least there is some truth in them. I would to God, dear friends, that you would believe these things to be true concerning Christ's ability to save, because you have God's Word for it, and if you ask me how I know it is God's Word, I can take you in vision to Nineveh.

See the excavated cities and palaces, the winged bulls and lions buried in the rubbish—all which tell us that that Book which spoke of them, before they were discovered, must have a high antiquity. And the volume which, written in the times of their glory, yet told of their tremendous fall, must have had an

inspiration in it not belonging to common books. The best proof of this inspiration is, perhaps, to be found in this—that we know that God wrote *another* book, the book of nature, and as the two works of one author are quite sure to exhibit some common points in which you may find out the author’s idioms, so every student of nature and revelation has been able to say that the two volumes bear marks of the same writer. And the more they have studied both books, the more they have said, “We find the same God in the one as in the other.” The God of nature is kind and good, and so is the God of revelation. The God of nature is the terrible God of the avalanche and thunderbolt, the tempest and the whirlwind; and the God of this Book is terrible out of His holy place when He comes to judge the sons of men. We find that the very same official approval which is set upon the book of nature is also stamped upon the Book of God. We would be glad, therefore, if you could believe this, and believing this you would soon, “Come and see,” for mark you, the best way of knowing about Christ is to *try Him*, to experience Him, and since you want to know if He can forgive sins, trust Him to forgive yours. You want to know if He can change the human heart—trust Him to change yours. You long to know if there is a peace that passes all understanding which will still the throbs of your guilty heart; try Him and see. You pant to learn if there is a joy which can gild your darkest hours with sunlight, and make the dreary passage through the shades of death to be full of life and hope—try Him and see. We are not afraid to stake all upon the trial. I will cheerfully be bondsman for my Lord and Master. If there can be a soul that sincerely trusts Him, that shall not find even in this life salvation, and in the world to come, eternal joy, then I am content to be deceived, or content to allow the deceiver’s doom! Beloved, if we only promised you something to be had in the next world, you could not make the test at once;



but that which we hold out to you is *present* salvation. It is not merely some future joy, but present joy! Oh, if you trust Jesus Christ, you shall “Come and see,” that sin is mastered as well as pardoned, that the guilty conscience is pacified forever, and that your joy and peace can begin this side of the grave. Inquirer, “Come and see.” Oh, pass not by; neglect not the exhibition of divine love and grace; but “Come,” oh, “Come and see.” May the Holy Spirit bring you, for His name’s sake.

Very hurriedly let me notice the next point. I think this invitation may be well addressed to *every beginner in the school of Christ*, as well as to every inquirer. We ought not to be satisfied with merely being saved. As soon as ever we are saved, the moment we believe in Christ—our next business is to learn more of Christ. You need to know the doctrines, dear friends. It is well to be thoroughly established in the faith. “Come and see,” search the Scriptures; see what God has revealed, and be established in His divine truths. Every precept, as well as every doctrine, cries to you, “Come and see.” Every promise says, “Come and see,” do not run short of promises! It is bad when a man is out of money; and the Christian, when he is without a promise in his hand, is somewhat like a person without ready money in his purse. Study the promises. “Come and see.” As to experience, too, the Lord says, “Come and see.” Do not talk of Tabor’s height, as though you could never climb it. From the top of it, there comes a voice, “Come and see.” Do not speak of Pisgah, as though your feet might never tread its consecrated summit. The voice says, “Come and see.” If there is any point of communion, or height of fellowship as yet unreachd by you, there peals forth from its excellent glory the endearing exhortation, “Come and see.” No boundry is set about the Mount of God; no fiery wall conceals the secret of the eternal. “The Spirit of the Lord is with them who fear Him; He will show them His covenant,” for all revelation cries with

one voice, “Come and see.” I think this is the cry of the gospel to every sinner, “Come and see.” Perhaps it is easier to use the eyes than any other organ except the ears. This I know, it is more *pleasing* to use the eyes than the ears. You can keep a set of children as happy as the birds of the air with a picture book—when they would probably go to sleep if you were to talk to them. The eye has the greatest power of conferring pleasure. Whether it conveys truth to the heart more rapidly than the ear does, I cannot say. At any rate, it does so most pleasingly, and for this reason, among others, Christ bids us to use the eyes. He hangs upon His cross before you, and cries, “Come and see.” And He adds this promise—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.”

What is there to see? God made flesh. He who made the heavens, veiling Himself in Manhood. Is not this something? God came down to you, poor sinner, that He might take you up to Himself. What is there to see? There is the Son of God bleeding for human sin. His griefs are such that no tongue can explain them, and no pen can write them—but they are not for Himself—for in Him is no sin. “Come and see,” for if you see the griefs of Jesus, and take them to be your trust, you shall be saved. “Come and see.” Do you ask what there is to see? This same Jesus rises from the tomb! He could not have risen if He had not been God, or if He had not completed the great work of His people’s redemption. He ascends. The clouds receive Him. Up there in heaven, He stands pleading for sinners, pleading for us, and “He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” “Come and see.” “Come and see.”

I am often asked, “Sir, how can I get faith?” I believe that faith comes from Christ, and is His gift to sinners. Sit down in your chamber tonight when you get home, you who want to believe, and just think this over—*GOD* made flesh! If you will

think of that, I pray the Holy Spirit visit you, and then the thought will strike you—"That is wonderful! Who could have dreamed of it? God suffering instead of man, that the justice of God might be fully satisfied, and the mercy of God might have full scope!" While you are thinking of this wonder, and picturing the wounds, and looking to the blood, and thinking that you almost hear the dropping of the blood upon the Mount of Calvary, I think you will, you scarcely know how, find yourself ready to sing—

"I do believe—I will believe  
That Jesus died for me;  
And on the cross He shed His blood  
From sin to set me free."

You cannot make yourself believe. Faith is the gift of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it comes through hearing, and hearing is principally blessed to the working of faith, because it gives you a sight of Christ in meditation, and as some say, "Seeing is believing." Certainly such a sight as hearing gives is often made the channel by which the soul believes in Christ. "Come and see." Oh you worldling. Turn your eyes here, and see the Savior die. Maybe the spectacle will cool your hot blood, and drive away your fever of worldliness and care. Oh, you giddy, careless men and women, look here and see your Redeemer bleed. Possibly you may be sobered by the sight. Oh young men and maidens in your early youth, since you may soon feel the arrows of death, look here and make your immortality secure. You gray-headed ones who have lost your vigor, and spent your strength in sin, yet may the Holy Spirit bring you—"Come and see." Oh, there is mercy yet, "Come and see." The great sight is not withdrawn—it is no dissolving view that melts away—it is no burning bush from which you

are bid to keep off by the words, “Draw not near here.” But here, over the cross, hangs the motto, and from the Mount of Calvary rings the silvery trumpet note, “Come and see. Come and see.”—

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One;  
There is life at this moment for you.”

II. The second text is, “**COME AND DINE.**” That is better; that is closer, nearer, dearer, more substantial than, “Come and see.” That may be done at a distance, though “Come” seems to invite us to make the distance less. But, “Come and dine”—that implies the same table, the same food—yes, and sometimes it means to sit side by side, and lean our head upon the Savior’s bosom. Here is nearness familiar and domestic—“Come and dine.” Understand that while we are sinners, faith brings us into a justified state by simply looking to Christ, though the soul has had no enjoyment of Him. But after believing, faith then assists us to really enjoy Christ. I know some of you are wishing and expecting to enjoy Christ first, and believe Him afterwards. I would correct your error. You must take God’s mercies in their order and season; and you will not find, “Come and dine,” in the *first* chapter of John—*there* it is, “Come and *see*.” Believe Jesus first, and you shall feed on Him afterwards. Certain of you seem to me to be content to believe Christ, and to say, “I am safe,” without wishing to know the blessed enjoyment which is to be found in Him. It should not be so. You are not to be content with the first chapter of John, but go on to the last, and be not satisfied so long as there is a “yet” beyond. If you have seen Christ—if you have touched Christ—if you have put your finger into the print of the nails, be not satisfied till you know the meaning of the text, “Except a man eat My flesh, and drink My blood, there is no life in him.”

“Come and dine,” then, implies greater enjoyment than, “Come and see.” “Come and see” gives peace, but “Come and dine,” gives ecstasy, rapture—what shall I call it? It gives heaven on earth, for it gives Christ. “Come and dine” must be experimentally understood before you can read the book of Solomon’s Song with profit. “Come and see” can read the evangelists; “Come and see” can read many of the epistles; “Come and see” may wander delightfully through the book of Psalms; “Come and see” may enrich itself with Proverbs. But the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the garden—that is, the book of Canticles [Song of Solomon]—is not to be eaten of except by those who have heard the Master say, “Come and dine.” I would to God that all the Lord’s people were not merely delivered from the chains of sin, and washed in the Savior’s blood, but brought into the banqueting house, where waves the banner of redeeming love!

There is more enjoyment, then, in the one than in the other, and there is also *more nearness*. When I first believed in Christ, I felt a distance between myself and Him, and the only nearness that I could get was to lay my hands upon His head and confess my sins. But I hope some of us, after a few years of believing, know what it is to sit at His feet with Mary, to lean upon His bosom with John—yes, and to say with the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” O beloved, there is a nearness to Christ which the worldling can only laugh at if he should hear us talk of it! Read *“Rutherford’s Letters,”* and you get a glimpse of what it is to dine with Christ. Turn to *“Hawker’s Morning and Evening Portions,”* or even, if you will, wander amidst the quaint rhymes, and sweet poetry of dear George Herbert—there you have, “Come and dine” carried out in sweetest prose. Oh, to get so close to Christ that you can sing with a modern hymn writer—

“So near, so very near to God,  
I cannot nearer be;  
For in the person of His Son  
I am as near as He!  
So dear, so very dear to God,  
I cannot dearer be;  
The love wherewith He loves His Son  
Such is His love to me!”

This is a high attainment, but rest not satisfied till you have gained it.

Yet, once more, “Come and dine,” gives us *a vision of union* with Jesus, because the only meat that we can eat when we dine with Christ is Himself. We do not provide the supper. When He dined on that occasion with His disciples, Peter dragged a net full of fishes out of the sea; but when they came on shore, they found a fire already kindled, and fish laid on it, so that the fish they ate did not come out of the sea by their net, at any rate. Christ found the fish and lit the fire, and He found the bread, and then said, “Come and dine.” Ah, and the fire that warms our heart when we have fellowship with Him comes from Himself, and the fish that we eat is His own, and the wine that we drink flows from His own heart. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth that reason cannot fathom, that we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ. Here we stand and look, and look and look, and though the water is clear as crystal, like the sea of glass before the throne of God, yet to the bottom of it angelic sight can never reach. One with Jesus— by eternal union one. What does this mean, believer?—

“One when He died; one when He rose;  
One when He triumphed over His foes!  
One when in heaven He took His seat,

And angels sang of hell's defeat.”

Can you comprehend it?—

“This covenant stands secure,  
Though earth's old columns bow,  
The strong, the feeble and the weak  
Are one in Jesus now.  
Oh, sacred union, firm and strong,  
How great the grace, how sweet the song,  
That worms of earth should ever be  
One with incarnate Deity!”

And yet it is so; and he who has listened to the Savior's voice, “Come and dine,” knows it to be so, and rejoices!

In this, also, you find an invitation to enjoy *fellowship with the saints*. You are not to eat your morsel alone, but in company. We sit down in heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—at the marriage supper of the Lamb—and no small part of the heavenly bliss is connected with the fellowship which exists among the saints in glory. So also with our present feasting on the fat things full of marrow which Christ spreads before His chosen ones. We enjoy the company as well as the feast, and find our happiness augmented by the society of kindred minds. The supper of the Lord is the table of communion, not only with the Master, but also with all who love Him in sincerity and truth. One of the surest ways of introducing discord into the midst of a church is for the minister to starve the people. Hungry men are sure to be quarrelsome, and on the contrary, to unite a flock in closest bonds of love, let the minister say, “Come and dine”—and then put before them the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock, and wine upon the lees well refined. If you would have sweetest fellowship with each other,

live on Christ, enter into the banqueting house, sit beneath the banner of love, and you will find that sacred commingling of spirit with spirit which will prove that you are one in Christ Jesus. Christians may differ on a variety of points, they may not see eye to eye on this thing, and on that, but they have all one spiritual appetite, and if we cannot all feel alike, we can all feed alike on the Bread of Life sent down from heaven. Get nearer to Christ and eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. We do not expect to see all Christians agreeing, but we are sure that one of the most likely plans for cultivating a brotherly spirit is to listen to Christ's words, "Come and dine."

We see in these words the *source of strength for every Christian*. To look at Christ is to live, but for strength to serve Him, you must come and dine. When our Lord had raised the daughter of Jairus, He commanded them to give her meat so that she might be strengthened. And so He says to all of us, "Come and dine." We need as much food for the soul as for the body, and unless we eat we shall be fainting by the way. Are there not many Christians who allow themselves to suffer a great deal of unnecessary weakness on account of neglecting this precept of the Master? I hold that we are bound to lift up the feeble knees and drooping hands, and in order to do this we must live by faith on the Son of God, and listen to His voice as He says, "Eat, oh My friends, yes, drink, oh My beloved." If you want to be as Mr. Feeblemind, I can give you the recipe. Take only a small portion of spiritual food morning and night in your closets; neglect family prayer; never attend a prayer meeting; on no account speak about religious matters during the week; go late to the house of God, and fall asleep when you get there; as soon as you leave the place of worship, talk about the weather. Confine yourself to these rules for a few weeks, and you will



very soon be reduced low enough to allow Satan to attack you with every chance of giving you a severe and dangerous fall. Doctors tell us that nowadays the classes of disease most prevalent are those which indicate a low condition of the vital forces. And I think that we are suffering in the Church from the same sort of maladies. You never hear of anyone who is too zealous, too rash in venturing himself for Christ! There was a time when the Church had to censure her young converts because they courted persecution and invited martyrdom. Now we need to stir up the Church, and to urge on our people to more self-sacrifice for the cause of Christ. You need never fear that anyone will kill himself with too much work—we must rather lament that there seems so little exuberance of spirit and vital force among Christians. We none of us need to put ourselves on a low diet—on the contrary, we ought to accumulate strength, and urge every power to its full dimension in the Master's service. For this purpose, "Come and dine." All your strength depends upon union with Christ. Away from Him you must wither as a branch severed from the vine. Feeding on Him, you will be like the branch which is drinking up the sap from the parent stem; you will be strong enough to bring forth fruit, and fill your post among the other members of the one great band of Christians.

We can see, moreover, in these words, the foundation of the Christian's *growth and progress* in spiritual things. To *see* Christ is to begin the Christian's life, but to grow in divine grace we must, "Come and dine." The early history of the first disciples is by no means satisfactory. They were evidently only babes in spiritual things. How little they seemed to comprehend the Savior's mission. He liked to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" They misunderstood the nature of His kingdom, and were continually displaying a carnal and selfish spirit. It is evident

that the early dawn of spiritual life is all they had then received. They had *seen* Jesus, they loved Him, and followed Him even unto trial and disgrace—but yet they were far from possessing the Spirit of Christ. Now, after they had reached this stage of living on Christ, they became new men. It is no longer mere sight, but an inward appropriation of Christ Jesus by faith, and the consequences are manifest; they are seen developing themselves under the blessed outpouring of the Holy Spirit into workmen who needed not to be ashamed. They endured hardness as good soldiers of the cross. They fought a good fight, and they finished their course with joy. A higher order of life is clearly theirs. They have risen in the scale of spiritual existence. A clearer light shines around them, and they have manifestly grown in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Beloved, we long for your edification, we covet for you the best gifts, and therefore, we say, “Come and dine.”

Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things so as to present the same appearance year after year. No upspringing of thought and feeling is manifest in them. They exist, but do not grow. The reason is evident—they are not taking of Christ—and they neglect to appropriate to themselves the blessing which He is waiting to bestow. Why should you rest content with being in the tender green blade, when you can go on and reach the ear, and eventually the full corn in the ear? I would that all God’s servants were more in earnest to develop that good thing which has been implanted in them by the Holy Spirit. It is all very well to keep other men’s vineyards, but you must not neglect your own. Why should it ever be winter in our hearts? We must have our seed time, it is true, but oh, for a spring time— yes, a summer season, which shall give promise of an early harvest. Now if you would ripen in grace, you must live near Christ—in His presence—basking in the sunshine of His smiles. You must hold sweet

communion with Him; you must leave the distant view of His face and come near, as John did, and pillow your head on His breast. Then you will find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope—yes, in every godly gift. What a joy it is to see men and women daily living on Christ. You may watch them grow as you have watched the flowers and trees in the gardens expanding under the genial showers and sunshine of the last few weeks. It robs a deathbed of its terrors to see the aged Christian rapidly preparing for glory, but I would rather the man grew before he was about to be taken from us, so that we might be the better for his expanded graces, and enjoy his beauty of holiness a few years here on earth. We do not grudge the saints in glory anything—but it would be a mercy to us if Christians would try and get as much of perfection and maturity as possible a few years sooner—so as to gladden our eyes with some bright blossoms as well as the somber green blades. It is all very well, the fresh greenness in early spring, but I like also the russet hues of autumn, and the rich clusters of the vintage with the songs of the reaper and the shout of “Harvest home!” The golden grain is a goodly and pleasant thing to see, as the field waves in the autumn breeze. So, also, I like to mark maturity in Christ’s fields, as well as in the earthly ones. It is a glorious sight, an experienced saint—a man who has been much with Jesus, and learned of Him—who has caught the Master’s spirit, and reflects it brightly to all around!

As the sun rises first on mountaintops and gilds them with his light, and presents one of the most charming sights to the eyes of the traveler, so is it one of the most delightful contemplations in the world to mark the glow of the Spirit’s light on the head of some saint who has risen up in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows, till, like some mighty Alp, snow-capped, he reflects first of all the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and bears the sheen of His brilliance high aloft

for all to see—and seeing it—to glorify His Father which is in heaven! That you may thus grow in grace, listen to the Master’s voice— “Come and dine.”

We notice one more thought, and then must conclude.

Here is *preparation for service*. “Come and dine,” says the Master; but before the feast is concluded, He says to Peter, “Feed My lambs.” And again, “Feed My sheep.” Further adding, “Follow Me.” All the strength supplied by Christ is for service, and for use in His vineyard. When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals, and the cruse of water placed at his head as he lay under the juniper tree, he had a commission to go 40 days and 40 nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Horeb, the mount of God. So also with us—we eat so as to be able to expend our strength in the Master’s service. We come to the Passover, and eat of our Paschal Lamb with loins girt, and with our staff in our hand—so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our spirits. Some Christians are for living *on* Christ, but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ. Now, I rejoice to know that I can spend and be spent for the Lord, and I find in labor for Christ that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” I never feel so like the Master as when I go about trying to do good. Heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Now earth should be a preparation for heaven—come and dine, and then go and labor! Freely you receive—freely give! Gather up all the fragments of your feast, and go and carry it to Lazarus at the gate; yes, carry the loaves and fishes to others, as the disciples did when the Lord had multiplied their little supply—to satisfy the thousands who were famishing for need of food. We have yet to learn more concerning the design of our Lord in giving us His grace. We are not to hold the precious grains

of truth like a mummy does the wheat, for ages, without giving it a chance of growing. No, feed yourself, and then go forth and bid others come and eat and drink; go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that there may be many more rejoicing with you in the light and life of Christ. Why does the Lord send down rain upon the thirsty earth, and give sunshine and genial refreshing breezes? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man and beast? Even so, the Lord calls us in to enjoyment and feasting, that we may afterwards go out to labor and service.

My dear hearers, I always seek to see you fruitful in all good works, to do His will who provides all things for us richly to enjoy. You are aware that our Father is glorified if we bring forth much fruit, and so shall we be His disciples. Eat, then; spare not; you are welcome to as much as you can consume, but when you have eaten the fat and drunk of the sweet, go and tell of it to sinners round, that the starving may come and find “wine and milk, without money and without price.” You are to preach the gospel to every creature—proclaim the good news of water from the Rock, Christ Jesus, which flows in the midst of the world’s wilderness, so that all may drink and live. Tell of the finest of the wheat on which you have feasted. Bid the prodigal leave the husks which the swine eat and return to the Father’s house, there to eat of the fatted calf, and feast at the parental board. Tell them there is room in the Savior’s heart, and never cease proclaiming His matchless love and power, and His willingness to say to all, “Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come and dine.”

I send you away, however, wishing to make the first part of the sermon the more telling to most of you—“Come and see.” You are black with sin, but blackness does not blind the eyes. Your righteousness is nothing better than filthy rags, but

the most ragged beggar may look. Our strange old proverb says, “A cat may look at a king,” and the blackest sinner out of hell may look at Christ; and though he has sin well near as devilish as that of Lucifer, yet, looking to Christ, all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven him! Look, sinner—look! May the Holy Spirit now open those eyes of yours, and turn them to the Savior’s cross, and make you live! May the best of heaven’s blessings be yours tonight and in eternity! Amen and Amen.

## 634 CHRISTIANS KEPT IN TIME AND GLORIFIED IN ETERNITY – JUDE 24-25

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”  
— Jude 24-25

OMITTING ALL preface it will be well to observe in what state of mind Jude was when he penned this doxology, what had been his previous meditations, and when we have done so, we will endeavor to come directly to the text, and observe what mercies he sums up in it, and what praise is due from us to Him of whom he thus speaks.

### **I. Then, UNDER WHAT INFLUENCE WAS JUDE’S MIND WHEN HE PENNED THIS DOXOLOGY?**

Our first observation is that in writing this very short but very full epistle, he had been led to consider the *grievous* faults of many others, and in contemplating those failures he could not resist the impulse of penning these words, “Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling.” You observe in reading that he mentions the Israelites who came out of Egypt. That was a glorious day in which the whole host met at Succoth, having just escaped from the thralldom of Egypt, and now found themselves delivered from the whips and the lashes of

the taskmasters, and were no longer compelled to make bricks without straw, and to build up palaces and tombs for the oppressors. That was, if possible, a more glorious day than when God divided the Red Sea to make a way for His people. The depths stood upright in a heap when the elect multitude walked through. Do you not see them, as with songs and praises they are led all that night through the deep as on dry ground? They are all landed on the other side, and then their leader lifts up his rod, and immediately there comes a wind, and the waters return to their place. The infatuated Egyptian king, who with his hosts had followed them into the depths of the sea, is utterly destroyed; the depths have covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters, there is not one of them left. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, saying, “I will sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

Is it credible, is it not too sadly incredible that this very people who stood by the Red Sea and marked the overthrow of God’s enemies, within a few days were clamoring to go back into Egypt, and before many months had passed were for taking to themselves a leader that they might force their way back into the place of their bondage? Yes, and they who saw Jehovah’s work and all His plagues in Zoan, made to themselves a calf, and bowed down before it and said, “These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” With tears in your eyes, look at the many griefs which studded the pathway of their 40 years’ wandering, and with many fears reflect that out of all that multitude which came out of Egypt, there were but *two* who lived to cross the Jordan. Aaron must put off the breastplate, for he has sinned against God, and even Moses, the meekest of men, must go to the top of Nebo, and is only permitted to gaze upon the prospect of that land which he must never actually enjoy, for



except for Caleb and Joshua, there were none found faithful among all the tribes, and these alone shall enter into the goodly land which flows with milk and honey.

Now when Jude thought of this, I do not wonder that he began to consider the case of himself and of his fellow believers, united with him in church fellowship at Jerusalem and elsewhere; and knowing that all of them who were truly brought up out of Egypt by Jesus, shall surely enter into the promised rest, he cannot, he does not desire to resist the impulse of singing, “Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.” If you read on to the next verse, you perceive that Jude had another example in his mind’s eye—the angels that kept not their first estate. We do not know much of angels, but from what we gather in Holy Scripture—perhaps tinged in our reading with some of the half-inspired ideas of Milton—we believe that angels are spirits vastly superior to ourselves. In intelligence they may well be so, even if they had been created upon a par, for they have had many years in which to learn and gather experience, whereas man’s existence is but a handbreadth. We regard an angel with intense respect, and while never paying any worship to those noble beings, we cannot but feel how little we are when compared with them. One of these angels appears to have been named Lucifer, son of the morning—perhaps he was a leader in the heavenly host, and first among the princes of heaven. He, together with multitudes of others, fell from their allegiance to God. We know not how; we have no idea if they were tempted, unless one of them tempted the other; but they kept not their first estate—they were driven out of heaven, they were expelled

from their starry thrones, and therefore they are reserved in chains of darkness until the great day of account.

Now, my brethren, can you think of the fall of angels without trembling? Can you think of the morning stars put out in blackness? Of the cherub, whose head did wear a crown, cast into the mire, and his crown rolled into the dust? Can you think of these bright spirits transformed into the hideous fiends that devils are? Their hearts, once temples for God, now become the haunt of every unclean thing, themselves the most unclean? Can you think of that without feeling a tremor of fear lest you, too, should fall from your first estate? And without another, and a higher thrill of joy, when you think of Him who is, “Able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”—

“When any turn from Zion’s way,  
(Alas, what numbers do!),  
I think I hear my Savior say,  
‘Will you forsake Me too?’  
Ah, Lord! With such a heart as mine,  
Unless You hold me fast,  
I feel I must, I shall decline,  
And prove like they at last.”

But we can also sing right joyously—

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
He will not, He will not, desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
He’ll never, no never, no never, forsake.”

We might continue to follow Jude, but we will not do so; we prefer to add something which Jude has not put in his

epistle. Our first parent, Adam, lived in the midst of happiness and peace in the garden. Unlike ourselves he had no depravity—no bias towards evil. God made him upright; he was perfectly pure, and it was in his own will whether he should sin or not. The balance hung evenly in his hands. But you have not forgotten how on that sad day he took of the forbidden fruit, and ate, and thereby cursed himself and all of us. My brethren, as you think of Adam, driven out of the garden of Eden, sent out to till the ground from where he was taken, compelled in the sweat of his face to eat bread. When you recollect the paradise he left, the happiness and peace that have forever passed away through his sin, do you not hear the voice that says to you, as a depraved and fallen creature, “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall”? Conscious of your own weakness, as compared with your parent, Adam, you are ready to cry out, “O God, how can I stand where Adam falls?” But here comes the joyous thought— Christ, who has begun with you, will never cease till He has perfected you! Can you help singing with Jude, “Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling”? It strikes me that every time we mark an apostate, and see the fall of a sinner or of a fellow professor, we should go down on our knees and cry, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe,” and then rise up and sing—

“To our Redeemer God  
Eternal power belongs,  
Immortal crowns of majesty,  
And everlasting songs.  
He will present our souls  
Unblemished and complete  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys divinely great.”

This partly accounts for the text before us; but on a further reference to the epistle, we get another part of the thoughts which had exercised the apostle's mind. Observe, dear friends, that the apostle had a very vivid and distinct sense of the *nature of the place* into which those fell, and of their utter ruin and destruction. Notice, concerning the children of Israel, he says that, "God destroyed them who believed not." What is it to be destroyed? Destroyed! This does not end with the white skeleton, and the bleached bones which lay in the wilderness—a horror to the passerby; he means something more than even that. Brought out of Egypt, and yet destroyed! Take heed, professor! You may be brought into something like gospel liberty, and yet may perish! Take heed, you carnal professor, I say! You may fancy you have escaped the bondage of the law, but yet you shall never enter into the rest which remains for the people of God—you shall be *destroyed*! Let that word "Destroyed" ring in your ears, and it will make you bless God, who is able to keep you from falling, if it shall lead you to flee to Him for help.

Next he says of the fallen angels, that they are, "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." What that may be, we can but roughly guess. Satan is allowed to go about the world, but still wears his chains, he has a tether, and the Lord knows how to pull him in, both by providence and direct acts of power. We believe that these spirits are under darkness; a gloom, a thick darkness that may be felt, hangs perpetually over their minds wherever they may be, and they are waiting till Christ shall come to summon them as rebellious creatures before His bar, that they may receive their sentence, and begin afresh their dreadful hell. And remember, dear brethren, unless eternal love shall prevent it, this case must be ours. We too must enter into places reserved in darkness, wearing everlasting chains, to endure eternal fire.

We should do so, we will do so, if it were not for Him, “who is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” Nor is this all, for if you will patiently read the next verse, you will see that Jude has, if possible, introduced a more graphic picture. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are bright as the sun goes down. The inhabitants are merry with boisterous laughter, there is plenty in the barn, there is luxury in the hall, for the plain of Sodom was well watered, and lacked for nothing. Down went that sun upon a disastrous evening, never to rise upon the most of those who were in that doomed city. At daybreak, just as the sun is beginning to shine upon the earth, angels had hastened Lot and his family out of the city—and no sooner had they reached the little city of Zoar, than straightway the heaven is red with supernatural flame, and down descends a terrific rain, as if God had poured hell out of heaven! He rained fire and brimstone upon the cities, and the smoke of their torment went up so that Abraham, far away to the west, could see the rolling cloud, and the terrible brightness of the fire, even at midday. And as men go to the “Lacus Asphaltites,” or the Dead Sea, they see to this day where death has reigned. There are masses of asphalt, still floating upon the surface of that sea where there is nothing that lives; no fish swim in its turbid streams; there are unquestionable evidences there of some dread judgment of God. And as Jude thought of this, he seemed to say, “Oh God, preserve us from such a doom, for this is the doom of all apostates, either in this world, or in that which is to come, thus to be consumed with fire.” And as he remembered that God would keep His people, he blessed that protecting hand which covers every saint, and he wrote down, “Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling.”

I have a thought in my mind, I cannot, of course tell whether it is right or not, but it strikes me just now—the

author's name is Jude—Judas. Did he recollect Judas, his namesake who was called Iscariot, as he penned these words? He had known him, probably had respected him as the others had done; he had marked him that night when he sat at the table, and like others said, "Is it I?" Probably Jude was very surprised when he saw Iscariot take the sop and dip in the dish with the Savior, and when he went out, he could scarcely believe his own ears, when the Savior said that he who betrayed Him had gone forth! He must have known how Judas kissed the Son of man and sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. He could not but be aware how in remorse he hanged himself, and how his bowels gushed out; and I think the shadow of the doom of Judas fell upon this better Judas while he penned these words—and he seems to say with greater emphasis—"Unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, unto Him be glory forever and ever." Thus you see, dear friends, we are getting into the track, I think, of Jude's thoughts—he thought about the failures of others, and the terrible way in which they had fallen.

Yet again, by your leave, Jude had a very clear view of the *greatness of the sins into which apostates fall*. Probably there is not in the whole compass of Holy Writ a more fearful picture of the sin of backsliders and apostates than in the epistle of Jude. I remember preaching to you one evening from that text, "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." I remember how you trembled—myself trembling most with such a terrible message to deliver! Where could such a text or simile be found but in the book of Jude? The sins of apostates are tremendous. They are usually not content with the average of human guilt; they must make themselves giants in iniquity. None make such devils as those that were once angels, and none make such reprobates as those who once

seemed to bid fair for the kingdom of heaven. These go into filthy dreams, into sensuality—"They give themselves over to fornication, and go after strange flesh," as he has put it. In fact, where can we set the bounds to which a man will go, when he crucifies the Lord who bought him, and puts Him to an open shame? Oh, beloved, as I think of the sin into which these apostates have gone, I cannot but feel that you must bless God with Jude, that there is One "Who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

**II.** I might continue in this strain, but perhaps I had better not. I would rather turn to **THE BLESSINGS OF WHICH JUDE SPEAKS.**

He seems to ascribe in this doxology three blessings, at least, to the power of the Lord Jesus. The first is *ability to keep you from falling*, and for this, I am sure, the highest praise is due, when you consider for a moment *the dangerous way*. In some respects the path to heaven is very safe. It is so as God made it, but in other respects there is no road, so dangerous, as the road to eternal life. It is beset with difficulties. In some of our mountain climbing, we have gone along narrow pathways where there was but a step between us and death—for deep down beneath us was a gaping precipice—perhaps a mile in perpendicular descent. One's brain reels at the thought of it now, and yet we passed along quite safely. The road to heaven is much like that. One false step, (and how easy it is to take that, if divine grace is absent), and down we go! What a slippery path is that which some of us have to tread.

You know that there are a million opportunities in a single week for your foot to slip, and for your soul to be ruined. There are some spots, I believe, upon some of the more difficult Swiss mountains, where no man ought to go at all, and where, if any must go, they should be only such as have become most

accomplished mountaineers through years of practice—for one has to cling to the side of the rock—to hold on, perhaps, by bushes or stones that may be there, with nothing for the feet to rest upon except, perhaps, an inch of projecting crag, and so we go creeping on with our backs to the danger, for to look down upon it would be to make the brain reel, and cause us to fall, and the result of falling, of course, would be the end of life—the body would be dashed into a thousand pieces. Such is truly the way to heaven. You must all have passed some such difficult places, and in looking back, I can only myself say, “Unto Him who has kept me from falling, when my feet had well near gone, and my steps had almost slipped, unto Him be glory forever and ever.”

But next, you have to think of the *weakness of the person*. Some men may travel roads which would not be safe for others, and what are you, my brother pilgrim, but a little babe? It is unsafe to trust you along the pathway to glory; in the best roads you are soon tripped up. Those feeble knees of yours can scarcely support your tottering weight. A straw might throw you, and a pebble could wound you. Oh, if you shall be kept, how must you bless the patient power, which watches over you day by day. Reflect upon your tendency to sin. The giddiness of that poor brain, the silliness of that deceitful heart. Think, how apt you are to choose danger—how the tendency is to cast yourselves down—how you rather are inclined to fall than to stand, and I am sure you will sing more sweetly than you have ever done, “Glory be to Him who is able to keep me from falling.” Then, you have to notice further, the many foes who try to push you down. The road is rough enough, the child is weak enough, but here and there is an enemy who is in ambush, who comes out when we least expect him, and labors to trip us up, or hurl us down a precipice.



I suppose you never did see a man fall from a precipice. Some of you may have been fools enough to go and see a man walk on a rope, in which case, I believe, you have incurred the guilt of murder; because if the man does not kill himself, you encourage him to put himself where he probably might do so. But if you have ever really seen a man fall over a precipice, your hair must surely have stood on end— your flesh creeping on your bones as you saw the poor human form falling off the edge, never to stand in mortal life again. Surely, as you left the place where you stood, and fled away from the edge of the precipice, you cried, “O bless Him, who made me stand, and kept my feet from falling!” How alarmed you would be if you were in such a position and had seen one fall, and that same monster, who had pushed him over, should come to hurl you over, also, and especially if you felt that you were as weak as water, and could not resist the gigantic demon. Now just such is your case; you cannot stand against Satan. A little maid made Peter deny his Master, and a little maid may make the strongest among us tremble sometimes. Oh, if we are preserved in spite of such mighty enemies who are always waiting to destroy us, we shall have great cause to sing praise “unto Him who is able to keep us from falling.”

*Christ has the power to take us into heaven.* You may keep a man from starving, but you cannot take him into the king's palace, and present him at court. Suppose that a man had been a rebel, you might hide him from the pursuers, and aid in his escape, but you could not take him into the presence of the king, and cause him to live in the royal castle of the land. But you see that Christ preserves His people though they have offended God, and daily provoke His justice; and He does more, for He presents them to the King of kings in the high court of heaven itself. This it is which makes the other blessing so great. We are not anxious to always live in this world. We find ourselves in a

strange land here, and would be glad to fly away, and be at rest. This is to us a wilderness state, and we rejoice to know that Canaan lies beyond. Our heavenly Joshua can lead us into it. He can fight for us against Amalek, and slay all our foes, and preserve us from falling. But better still, He can and He will, take us into the promised land, and give us to see the “better country, even the heavenly,” and to there will He conduct all the host, so that not one shall perish or be left behind. Christ gives preservation, but He adds glorification, and that is better still. Here then, my brethren, is a thought of incomparable sweetness, we are safe while in this world—

“More happy, but not more secure are  
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

And we, too, shall be, before long, as happy as they are because He will present us with them before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

We cannot, however, enlarge on this point, though there is much, very much, that ought to be said. We proceed to notice *the condition in which the saints are to be when presented*—they are to be “faultless”—for our Lord never stops short of perfection in His work of love. That Savior, who means to keep His people to the end, will not present them at last just alive, all black and foul as when He helped them out of the miry places. He will not bring them in, as sometimes gallant men have to bring those whom they have rescued from drowning, with just the vital spark within them. No, our Savior will carry His people safe from falling through this life, and He will present them, how?—faultless. Oh, that is a wondrous word, “faultless,” we are a long way off from it now. Faulty, yes, we are now faulty through and through—but Jesus Christ will never be content till we are faultless. And this He will make us in three ways—

He will *wash us* till there is not a spot left, for the chief of sinners shall be as white and fair as God's purest angel; the eyes of justice will look, and God will say, "No spot of sin remains in you." You may have been a drunk, a thief, an adulterer, and what not; but if Christ, in mercy, undertakes your case, He will wash you in His blood so thoroughly that you shall be faultless at the last. You will be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Now we are defiled and covered with sin, as if we had "lay among the pots." We have reveled in uncleanness till we are as if we had been "plunged in the ditch." Our own flesh must abhor us, if we could but see how defiled we are by nature and by practice. Now all this shall be completely removed, and we shall be whiter than snow. You remember that when the disciples looked at Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, they saw that His garments were white and glistening—whiter than any fuller could make them—and so shall we be hereafter, whiter and fairer than any earthly art can attain to. The sea of glass, clear as crystal, will not be whiter or purer than we shall be when washed in the blood of the Lamb.

But that is only one way. If a man had no faults, it would still be necessary for him to have some virtues. A man cannot enter heaven simply because transgression is put away. The law must be kept; there must be a positive obedience to divine precepts. Religion is no negation, an absence of things merely evil; it is the presence of the good, the true, and the pure. But since even when we do our best, we shall be unprofitable servants, we need something higher than we can ever produce by these, our feeble and sinful powers; therefore *the Lord our God imputes to us the perfect righteousness of His Son Christ Jesus*, for—

"Lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found;  
He took the robe the Savior worked,

And cast it all around.”

The righteousness of Jesus Christ will make the saint who wears it so fair that he will be positively faultless. Yes, perfect in the sight of God. There is fullness in this, which it delights my soul to dwell upon. A man may be faultless in my sight, but not in the sight of those who know him intimately. A Christian may be so holy as to escape the censure of all just men; but ministering spirits, who read the heart and deal with the inner man, can speak of evil which has not come to light before human eyes. But we know that God sees even more clearly than angelic spirits, for He charges them with folly. Now, God is to see no iniquity in us, no shortcoming. We shall be tried in His scales, and set in the light of His countenance, and be pronounced, “Faultless.” God’s Law will not only have no charge against us, but it will be magnified in us, and honored by us. We shall have imputed to us that righteousness which belongs to Him who has done all this for us that He might “present us faultless before the presence of His glory.”

Fourthly and best, perhaps, *the Spirit of God will make new creatures of us*. He has begun the work, and He will finish it; He will make us so perfectly holy that we shall have no tendency to sin any more. The day will come when we shall feel that Adam in the garden was not more pure than we are. You shall have no taint of evil in you. Judgment, memory, will—every power and passion shall be emancipated from the thralldom of evil. You shall be holy, even as God is holy, and in His presence you shall dwell forever! How altered we shall be, for look within, and see if your experience is not like the Apostle Paul’s, who found a potent law in his members, so that when he would do good, evil was present with him, and when he desired to escape some evil, he did at times the very thing he allowed not, but would most heartily condemn. So is it with us; we would be

holy, but we are like a ball that has a bias in it, we cannot go in a straight and direct line. We try to hit the mark, but we are prone to start on one side like a deceitful bow. There is a black drop in our hearts which taints all the streams, and none of them can be pure; but it will be all changed one day, we shall be re-made, and all the evil gone, gone forever. How joyous must have been the entrance of Naaman, the Assyrian, into his house after he had washed in Jordan's stream, and found his flesh restored to him as the flesh of a little child. I think I see him as the watchman on the tower has given notice of his approach in the distance; the whole household is at the gate to meet him, and to see if he comes back in health. His wife, if Eastern customs would not permit her going forth in public, would look from her easement to catch a glimpse of his face—to see if the dread spots were gone. How joyful the shout—"He is cured and clean!" But this is nothing compared with the rapture of that hour when the everlasting doors will be lifted up, and we, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, shall enter into the joy of our Lord!

Or take another illustration from Scripture, and try and realize the happiness which reigned in the family of the maniac out of whom the legion of devils had departed. Perhaps he had been home before when under the evil influence of the foul fiends—how terrified they doubtless were, with the mad frenzy of the poor unhappy wretch, as he cut himself with stones, and broke all bonds put on him in tenderness and love, in order to restrain his self-imposed misery and wounds. And now, as he comes once more to his house, they see him approach, and the old terror seizes them because they know not that he is a changed man, but suppose him still to be the demented being of days gone by. But he enters the door as calm and composed as if he had returned from a long journey, and was only anxious to relate the incidents of the pilgrimage, and greet loved friends

once more! With no fierce frenzy rolling in his eyes, no loud discordant shrieks rending the air, all is the demeanor of a well-regulated, joyful, yet chastened mind; as all this is realized by his friends, and they hear what great things the Lord has done for him! What joy must have been in that family circle! I should like to have seen it; I am sure it was a choice exhibition of real human bliss such as earth only witnesses now and then. It must have been a beam of purest radiance lighting up the scene, like the splendor which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus, as it lit up the day when he was made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Here also we can most truthfully say that the joy, though great, was not comparable to the joy which shall be ours when we are changed into new creatures—when we shall be clothed and in our right mind—no longer prone to wander among the black mountains of iniquity, and no more tempted to abide among those dead in trespasses and sins. Then we shall be ever holy, and always living unto God, and made like He! Oh this is joy indeed! Not only will He keep us from falling, but He will present us faultless!

My brethren, at the thought of this I think you must join with Jude, and say, “Now unto Him who is able to do all this, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.” I cannot speak to you as I would wish upon such a theme as this—who could? But when we get to heaven, our song there shall be sweeter, louder, because we shall understand better the dangers from which we have escaped, and how very much we owe to Him who has kept us, and brought us safely through all the changes of life, unto the place He has prepared for us. Meanwhile, never let us be forgetful of that mighty goodness which holds us fast, and will not let us go.

**III.** Still I have not done with the text. I have already forestalled my next thought, but I think it requires a special

notice. Observe, the apostle adds, “To present us faultless before His presence, **WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY.**”

Who will have the joy? My brethren, *you* will have it. Have you ever pondered upon the parable of the prodigal son? I know you have! No one can have diligently read the Bible without staying to think over, again and again, of that most tender and instructive of our Lord's parables. Now, I ask, who was happy at that feast? Don't you think it was the prodigal? What was the character of those thoughts filling his heart, and making it heave as if it would burst? How overjoyed he must have been; how utterly crushed down with his father's love, and all the unexpected marks of kindness and affection. He had had his days of feasting and sinful merriment, but no songs could ever have been as sweet as those which rung round the old roof-tree to welcome him home. No morsel had ever tasted as delicious as that fatted calf; and no voice of any companion or witching charmer at his guilty feasts, had ever sounded such melodious notes in his ears as those words of his father, “Let us eat and be merry.” So will it be with us when we have been restored to ourselves—when wearied of the world, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we shall have been led to the Father's house by the cords of love which the Spirit shall cast around us. When safely brought through all the weary pilgrimage from the far-off country, we shall tread the golden streets, and be safe inside the pearly gates, and have the past all gone forever among the things we never shall meet again. What rapture will be ours. This will be heaven, indeed, when sin shall be gone, Satan shut out, temptation gone forever; you shall have a joy of which you cannot now conceive. Rivers of pleasure shall flow into your soul; you shall drink such draughts of bliss as your soul has never known this side the grave. Oh, be joyful now with a respite of the joy which is to be revealed; and afterwards you shall have the fullness of divine bliss forever

and ever! Who shall be happy? Why, the *minister* will be happy! What pleasure was there in the heart of the shepherd youth, David, the son of Jesse, when he had gone forth to do battle with the lion and bear, in order to rescue the lamb out of their jaws, when God had delivered him and made him successful in his attempt! How gladly he must have watched the little lamb run to the side of its dam, and in the mutual pleasure of these poor dumb animals, I am sure he found a joy.

And so all the shepherds in heaven, all who have been faithful pastors, who have cared for and tended their flocks, shall find a bliss unspeakable in welcoming to glory those darling ones preserved from the power of the devil, “Who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” Yes, ministers will be sharers in this happiness! I think we shall have a special joy in bringing our sheaves with us. If it may please God to keep me from falling—if I just get inside the door of heaven with some of the many thousands who God has given to me as my spiritual children—I will fall prostrate before His feet, the greatest debtor to His mercy who ever lived, and one who has more cause than any other of His creatures to thank Him, and ascribe to Him glory and honor, dominion and power, forever and ever. Here I am, and the children whom You have given me; unto You be praise! And what will be the joy of *angels*, too? How exceedingly great their bliss will be. If there is joy among the angels over one sinner who repents, what will there be over ten thousands times ten thousands, not of repenting, but of perfected sinners, cleansed from every stain, set free from every flaw? Oh, you cherubim and seraphim, how loud will be your music! How you will tune your harps anew, how shall every string wake up to the sweetest music in praise of God. “Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof,” at the thought of the glorious joy at God’s right hand. Who will have joy? I ask again. Why Christ will have the most joy of all. Angels and



ministers and you, yourselves, will scarcely know such joy as He will have—all His sheep safely folded— every stone of the building placed in its proper position; all the blood-bought and blood-washed ones, all whom the Father gave Him, delivered out of the jaw of the lion; all whom He covenanted to redeem effectually saved—His counsel all fulfilled, His stipulations all carried out—the Covenant not only ratified, but fulfilled, in all its jots and tittles. Verily, none will be as happy as the great surety in that day!

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall Christ rejoice over you! You know it is written that, “For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And also, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be abundantly satisfied.” Now this satisfaction and joy will be our Lord’s, when the whole church is faultless and complete in the presence of His glory; but not till then. In that hour, when all His jewels are reckoned up, and none found missing, He shall rejoice anew in spirit, and shall thank God with yet more of joy than He did when here on earth, and thought of this day in prospect, and by that thought, nerved Himself for cruel suffering and a death of shame. Yes, Christ will be glad! Our Head will have His share of joy with all the members, and happily He will be able to bear more, as He most certainly deserves and will have more. Who will have joy? Why, *God Himself* will have joy. It is no blasphemy to say that the joy of God on that occasion will be infinite. It is always infinite; but it will be then infinitely displayed before His creatures’ gaze. Listen to these words—you cannot fathom them, but you may look at them. It is written, “The Lord your God will rejoice over you with joy; He will joy over you with singing” (Zeph 3:17). As I have said on this platform before, I think that is the most wonderful text in the Bible in some respects—*God Himself singing!* I can imagine, when the world was made, the morning

stars shouting for joy; but God did not sing. He said it was, “Very good,” and that was all. There was no song. But oh, to think of it, that when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, the joy of the Eternal Father shall swell so high, that God, who fills all in all, shall burst out into an infinite, Godlike song!

I will only put in this one more thought, that all this, beloved, is about YOU. All this you have a share in, the least in the church, the poorest in the family, the most humble believer—this is all true of you—He will keep you from falling, and present you spotless before His presence, with exceedingly great joy. Oh, cannot you join the song and sing with me, “To the only wise God and Savior be glory and honor, dominion and majesty forever. Amen”? For my part I feel like that good old saint who said that if she got to heaven, Jesus Christ would never hear the last of it. Truly He never shall—

“I’ll praise my Savior with my breath;  
And when my voice is at last in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers—  
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,  
While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures.”

I want you to go away with a sense of your own weakness, and yet a belief in your own safety. I want you to know that you cannot stand a minute—that you will be damned within another second unless divine grace keep you out of hell, but I want you to feel that since you are in the hands of Christ you cannot perish, neither can any pluck you out of His hands! And, poor sinners, my heart’s desire is that you may be put into the hands of Christ tonight, that you may have done with trusting yourselves. You can ruin, but you cannot save yourselves. “Oh

Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help found.” Christ alone can save you, oh look out of self to Christ; trust yourselves in His hands; He is “able to keep you from falling.” You cannot even stand upright yourselves, and if He should set you upright, you cannot keep so for a minute without His protecting care. If saints need to be kept, how much more need have you to seek the shelter of the Savior’s wounded side—flee there as the dove to the cleft of the rock! If holy men of God cry daily for pardon, and profess to have no right of themselves to heaven, how much more urgent is your case? You will perish if you die as you are! You can never make yourself *faultless*, but Christ can. He wants to do it—He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness— wash and be clean!

Again, I say, look to Jesus! Away with self, and cling to Christ, down with self-confidence and up with simple faith in Christ Jesus. I shall not let you go, dear friends, without singing one verse which I think will express the feeling of each one of us—

“Let me among Your saints be found,  
Whenever the Archangel’s trump shall sound,  
To see your smiling face;  
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,  
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace.”

## **635 ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE – JER. 12:5**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” — Jeremiah  
12:5**

CANAAN MAY BE considered as a type of two states or conditions in the Christian's life. It was the land of rest to the children of Israel after a weary pilgrimage in the wilderness. Now it is written that, “We who believe do enter into rest.” A true Christian, possessed of strong faith, will not have a wilderness state on earth so much as a land flowing with milk and honey, because his faith will give him the substance of things hoped for, and be the evidence of things not seen. Many disciples live a life of depression, wretchedness, and discomfort which would be completely changed if they had faith in God, and lived a higher life of devotedness and love. Canaan may be fairly considered as a type of that better state of Christianity which some enjoy. It is not altogether free from ills; the Canaanite dwells in the land, and there are still wars and fights, but there is rest, and there is the spirit of service developing itself in the cultivation of the promised land. But Canaan is generally used to shadow forth, “The rest which remains for the people of God” beyond the skies. Heaven is thus frequently described as corresponding to the earthly inheritance of the Jews. It is our hope, the end of our pilgrimage. It contains our Jerusalem, and the temple “not made with hands.” When this

is the view taken of the type, then Jordan is not unnaturally likened unto death. Its dark waters are made to picture forth to our minds the chill stream through which we wade in our dying hour. It is a beautiful emblem, and we have all doubtless often sung Dr. Watt's hymn with much feeling—

“There is land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.  
There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.”

Taking “the swelling of Jordan” to represent the precise time of death, the question really is what shall we do when we come to die? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**I.** We notice, in the first place, that this is an **EXCEEDINGLY PRACTICAL QUESTION.**

“How will you *do*?” is the inquiry. There are some subjects which are more or less matters of pure faith and personal feeling; and though all Christian doctrines bear more or less directly upon the Christian life, yet they are not what is commonly meant by practical subjects. Our text, however, brings us face to face with a matter which is essentially a matter of doing and of acting—it asks how we mean to conduct ourselves in the hour of death. We sometimes hear the remark made by those who object to doctrinal preaching, that we are too speculative, and utter our own opinions which feed men's fancies, but do not regulate their life. Now, we believe that every promise leads to a precept, and every doctrine has its duty; so we will not admit the justice of the insinuation, even if we

did preach doctrine entirely to the exclusion of the commandments, which we emphatically deny. But here we have, at any rate, a topic practical enough; I am only afraid it will be a little too much so for some; they will turn it into a sentiment and a feeling, and not act upon it so as to put it into practice, and exemplify its power in later days. Christians may differ with me on some points, but I am sure that here we are united in belief—we must die, and ought not to die unprepared. There is a divergence of opinion as to what we ought to do at the commencement of our Christian life; *I* maintain that we ought to follow Christ, and be immersed in water, “For thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” Others oppose that as being unnecessary, inexpedient, or what not; we differ at the beginning of life, but we agree in the end—we must die; and we all want to die the death of the righteous, and to have our last end like his.

**II. We notice, in the second place, that it is UNDOUBTEDLY A PERSONAL QUESTION.**

“How will *you* do?” It individualizes us, and makes us each one to come face to face with a dying hour. Now, we all *need* this, and it will be well for each one of us to look for a minute into the grave. We are too apt to regard all men as mortal but ourselves. Somehow, we can see frailty of life as well as all the other frailties which we possess in common, much more clearly in other people than we can in ourselves. We are far too much blind to our own weakness, and shall do well to ask ourselves each of us, “My Soul, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” The ancient warrior who wept because, before a hundred years were passed, he knew his immense army would be gone, and not a man remain behind to tell the tale, would have been wiser, if he had wept also for himself, and left his bloody wars alone, and lived as a man who must one day die, and find after death a day of judgment. Each one of you must die. If I were

addressing an assembly of the sages of the world, I would say, “All your combined wisdom cannot lengthen the days of one of you even a single minute. You may reckon the distance of the stars, and weigh worlds, but you cannot tell me when one of you will die, nor how many grains of sand are left behind in the hourglass of time which shows the exit of each spirit from the world.” I say now to you, the wisest of you must die; and you know not but that you may die before long. So with the mightiest, and the richest of men. Samson was mastered by a stronger than man, and the wealthiest of men cannot bribe death to delay his dart for a single hour.

We all come into the world one by one, and will go out of it alone, also. Loved ones come to the brink of the dark stream, but there they shake hands and say, “Farewell,” and we go on alone. The prophet’s companion and successor followed his master till the fiery chariot came to take his leader away; but when the messengers of God came, they left the servant behind, vainly crying, “My father, my father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.” We had better, therefore, take the question up as individuals, seeing that it is one in which we shall be dealt with singly, and be unable then to claim or use the help of an earthly friend. I put to the young, to the old; to the rich, to the poor; to each one of this vast assembly—I put it as if we were alone before our God—“How will *you* do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**III.** As a third thought, we call attention to the fact that it is one of the **MOST SOLEMN** questions.

Death and life are stern and awful realities. To say that anything “is a matter of life and death,” is to bring one of the most emphatic and solemn subjects under our notice. Now, the question we are considering this morning is of this character, and we must deal with it as it becomes us, when we investigate a subject involving the everlasting interest of souls. The

question is of infinite importance to all, but there are some whose case is manifestly such that they need to gird up the loins of their minds and address themselves to its consideration, with intense thought and care. Let me call attention to one or two cases, for while I wish to stir up all, I am bid to have special compassion on some, making a difference, so that I may pluck them as brands out of the fire.

I have been curious enough to think that I should like to ask that question of a Jew, of one who rejects Christ as the Messiah. “How will *you* do in the swelling of Jordan?” According to the law, and it is that under which every Jew is born, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Now, there never was, and never will be, any man who did, or could “continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them,” and consequently, every man becomes accursed. And it must be a dreadful thing for a man to think of dying under the curse and ban of his own religious faith; and yet every Jew is so, cursed by his own book of law—accursed forever! What comfort will that yield him when he comes to the swelling of Jordan? I have thought, too, that I should like to ask the atheist, the unbeliever, this question, “How will *you* do in the swelling of Jordan?” He tells me, perhaps, that he believes in annihilation—he will need comfort when he is lying upon that last weary bed; will he get it out of that well? The dreary blank of total destruction, of ceasing to be; is there anything to help a spirit when it lies where it most needs consolation, tossing to and fro in pain and weakness? I think not.

I should like also to put the question to a Roman Catholic—“How will *he* do in the swelling of Jordan?” Some time ago, you will remember, a prince of the Catholic Church departed—where did he go? I am not versed in such matters, and should not like to judge anybody’s soul, but on the coffin



of the Cardinal, we find a request that we should pray for his soul, and there have been masses said for its repose. It is evident, therefore, that the Cardinal's soul went somewhere, where it needs praying for, and to some place where it is not in repose. Now, if this is to be the lot for a Cardinal Archbishop, there is but a poor outlook for an ordinary professor of the same faith; if a *prince* in the church dies, and goes not to heaven as we have been hoping, not to eternal rest, but to a place where he needs our intercession, and where he has no repose for his soul, why then it must be dreadful work to die with such a creed as that! I would sooner have beneath my head the most prickly thorn bush than have that for my dying pillow. Oh, we need something better than this, we desire a hope more rapturous, more divine, more full of immortality than the certainty of going to a place where there is no repose, and where our souls need the prayers of sinful men on earth. But I do not know that we have very much to do with any of these—they must “*Gang their ain gait*”—they must go their own way; and if they are found wrong at the last, we are sorry that it should be so. But *our own* business is certainly the first matter in hand. Therefore, forgetting them, let the question come to each of us, “How will *you* do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**IV.** Remember, in the fourth place, that this question was put by way of **REBUKE** to the prophet Jeremiah.

He seems to have been a little afraid of the people among whom he dwelt. They had evidently persecuted him very much, mocking him, and laughing him to scorn; but God tells him to make his face like flint, and not to care for them, for, He says, “If you are afraid of them, ‘How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?’” This ought to be a rebuke to every Christian who is subject to the fear of man. I do not believe that any preacher will be long in his pulpit without having the temptation to be afraid of some man or another; and if he does not stand very

firmly upon his integrity, he will find some of the best of his friends getting the upper hand with him. And this will never do with God's minister. He must deal out God's Word impartially to rich or poor, to good or bad; and he must determine to have no master except his Master who is in heaven—no bit nor bridle for his mouth except that of prudence and discretion—which God Himself shall put there. For, if we are afraid of a man who shall die, and the son of man who is crushed before the moth, how fearful shall we be when we have to talk with the grim king of terrors! If we are afraid of puny *man*, how shall we be able to face it out before the dread ordeal of the Day of Judgment? Yet I know some Christians who are very much abashed by the world's opinion, by the opinion of their family circle, or of the workshop. Now, what does it matter after all? There is an old proverb, that, "He is a great fool who is laughed out of his coat," and there was an improvement on it, that, "He was a greater fool who was laughed out of his skin." And there is another, that, "He is the greatest fool of all who is laughed out of his soul." He, who will be content to be damned in order to be fashionable, pays dearly indeed for what he gets. Oh, to dare to be singular, if to be singular is to be right; but if you are afraid of man, what will you do in the swelling of Jordan?

The same rebuke might be applied to us when we get fretful under the little troubles of life. You have losses in business, vexations in the family—you all have crosses to carry—but my text comes to you, and it says, "If you cannot bear this, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? If your religion is not equal to the ordinary emergencies of common days, what will you do when you get to that extraordinary day which will be to you the most important day of your being?" Come friends, be not bowed down with these things! Bear them cheerfully since there is much sterner work to do than any that you have met with in the battle of life. And the same

reproof might come to us when we get petulant under pains of body, for there are some of us, who as soon as we get a little sick, become so fretful that those who like us best are farthest from us; we can scarcely have a little depression of spirit, but straightway we are ready to give up all for lost, and like Jonah say, “We do well to be angry even unto death.” Now, this ought not to be. We should quit ourselves like men, and not be perturbed with these little rivulets; for if these sweep us away, what shall we do when Jordan is swollen to the brim, and we have to pass through that?

When one of the martyrs, whose name is the somewhat singular one of Pommily, was confined previous to his burning, his wife was also taken up upon the charge of heresy. She, good woman, had resolved to die with her husband, and she appeared, as far as most people could judge, to be very firm in her faith. But the jailer's wife, though she had no religion, took a merciful view of the case as far as she could do so, and thought, “I am afraid this woman will never stand the test, she will never burn with her husband. She has neither faith nor strength enough to endure the trial.” Therefore, one day calling her out from her cell, she said to her, “Lass, run to the garden and fetch me the key that lies there.” The poor woman ran willingly enough; she took the key up and it burned her fingers, for the jailer's wife had made it red hot; she came running back crying with pain. “Yes, Wench,” said the jailer's wife, “if you cannot bear a little burn in your hand, how will you bear to be burned in your whole body?” And this, I am sorry to add, was the means of bringing her to recant the faith which she professed, but which never had been in her heart. I apply the story thus—If we cannot bear the little trifling pangs which come upon us in our ordinary circumstances, which are as it were the burning of our hands, what shall we do when every pulse beats pain, and every throb is an agony, and the whole

tenement begins to crumble about the spirit that is so soon to be disturbed? Come, let us pluck up courage! We have yet to fight the giant! Let us not be afraid of these dwarfs! Let the ordinary trials of every day be laughed to scorn! In the strength of divine grace, let us sing with our poet—

“Weak as I am, yet through Your strength,  
I all things can perform.”

For if we cannot bear these, how will we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is what the text was originally meant to teach. We will now use it for a further purpose.

**V.** The question may be put as **A MATTER OF CAUTION.**

In this assembly, there are some who have no hope, no faith in Christ. Now, I think, if they will look within, at their own experience, they will find that they are by no means completely at ease. The pleasures of this world are very sweet; but how soon they sour if they do not sicken the appetite. After a night of merriment, there is often the morning of regret. “Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine.” It is an almost universal confession that the joys of earth promise more than they perform, and that, in looking back upon them, the wisest must confess with Solomon, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Now, if these things seem to be vanity while you are in good bodily health, how will they look when you are in sickness? If vanity while you can enjoy them, what will they appear when you must say farewell to them all? If it were vanity to the rich man while he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, what greater vanity it must have been when it was said, “This night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?”

How will you do in Jordan when these joys shall vanish, and there shall be a dreary blank before you?

Moreover, you feel already that conscience pricks you. You cannot live without God and be perfectly at ease, unless you are one of those few who are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. You could not take an hour quietly to think about yourself and your state, and yet go to your bed easily. You know right well that the only way some of you can keep your peace of mind at all is by going from one gay assembly to another, and from one party of frolic to another, or else from business to business, and from care to care. Your poor soul, like the infant which is to be cast into Moloch's arms, cries, and you do not hear its cries because you drown it with the noisy drums of this world's pleasures and cares. But still, you are not at rest—there is a worm in your fair fruit, there are dregs at the bottom of your sweetest cups, and you know it. Now, if even now you are not perfectly at peace—if in this land of peace wherein you have trusted, you are getting weary of these things—then, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Moreover, you sometimes have, if I am not mistaken, very strange apprehensions. I have known some of the most reckless sinners who have had fearful times, when nobody could cheer them; when a certain fearful looking of judgment has haunted them. The most superstitious people in the world are those who are the most profane. It is a strange thing that there is always that weak point about those who seem to be most hardened. But you who are not thus hardened—you know that you dare not look forward to death with any pleasure—you cannot! To go to the grave is never very joyous work with you. Yes, and if you were certain that there could be no more death, it would be the best news that you had ever heard! But to some of us it would be the worst that could ever come.

Ah, well! If the very thought of death is bitter, what will the reality be? And if to gaze at it from a distance is too hard a thing for your mind, what will it be to pass under its yoke—to go through its dark valley, to feel its dart—to know that the poison is rankling in your veins? What will you do? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Well, I shall not describe what you will do, though I have seen it, and you must have seen it, too. Sometimes a man dies at ease, like a sheep, because he has been dosed with the opium of self-confidence. At other times, the man is awakened, and sees the dreadful doom to which death is driving him, and starts back and shrinks from the wrath to come, and cries and shrieks—and perhaps swears that he will not die! And yet die he must—dragged down to that place where he must lift up his eyes to see nothing that can give him hope—nothing that can take away the sharpness of his anguish. I leave this point. God make it a caution to many now present. Some of you men and women here may be nearer death than you dream of. I wish you would answer the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**VI.** But now I intend to use the question as **EXCITING MEDITATION** in the breasts of those who have given their hearts to Christ, and who consequently are *prepared* to die, whenever the summons may come. Well, what do we mean to do—how shall *we* behave ourselves when we come to die? I sat down to try and think this matter over, but I cannot, in the short time allotted to me, even give you a brief view of the thoughts that passed through my mind. I began thus, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Well, as a believer in Christ, perhaps I may never come there at all, for there are some who will be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man, and these will never die. For so says the apostle—“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” This

thought we wish to keep ever before us. My real hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would far rather see the Master return than see the messenger death. I regulate my life as one who is looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man. I will not pay more attention to the servant than to the Lord of All. “Come, Lord Jesus! Yes, come quickly,” is the prayer of our hearts continually; and as the bride of Christ, we ought to have our hearts filled with rapture at the thought of His return to claim us as His own. If He sends for us, “It is well,” but best of all if He comes Himself again the second time without sin unto salvation. A sweet truth of God, which we place first in our meditation—I may not die, but I must and shall be changed!

Then, I thought again, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” I may go through it in the twinkling of an eye. Remember that good man, who some time ago was getting ready to preach as usual, but the sermon was never delivered on earth? I mean the President of the Wesleyan Conference—how speedily was he taken to his rest; and how happy it is just to close one’s eyes on earth, and open them in heaven. Such also was the death of one of God’s aged servants, Mr. Alleine, who had battled well for the truth of God. He was suddenly taken ill, and was advised to retire to bed. “No,” he said, “but I will die in my chair; and I am not afraid to die.” He sat down, and only had time to say, “My life is hid with Christ in God,” and he closed his eyes with his own hands and fell asleep. When Ananias, a martyr, knelt to lay his white head upon the block, it was said to him as he closed his eyes to receive the stroke, “Shut your eyes a little, old man, and immediately you shall see the light of God.” I could envy such a calm departing. Sudden death, sudden glory; taken away in Elijah’s chariot of fire, with the horses driven at the speed of lightning, so that the spirit scarcely knows that it has left the clay, before it sees the

brightness of the beatific vision! Well, that may take away some of the alarm of death—the thought that we may not be even a *moment* in the swelling of Jordan!

Then again, I thought if I must pass through the swelling of Jordan, yet the real act of death takes no time. We hear of suffering on a dying bed; the suffering is all connected with *life*, it is not death. The actual thing called death, as far as we know, does not cost a pang—it is the life that is in us that makes us suffer—death gives one kind pin’s prick, and it is all over. Moreover, if I pass through the swelling of Jordan, I may do so without suffering any pain. A dying bed is sometimes very painful with certain diseases, and especially with strong men, it is often hard for the body and soul to part. But it has been my happy lot to see some deaths so extremely pleasing, that I could not help remarking that it were worth while living only for the sake of dying as some have died. We have seen consumption for instance—how very often it gently takes down the frame; how quietly the soul departs; and in old age, and debility, how easily the spirit seems to get away from the cage that was broken, which only needed one blow, and the imprisoned bird flies straight away to its eternal resting place! Well, then, as I cannot tell in what physical state I may be when I come to die, I just tried to think again, how shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? I hope I shall do as others have done before me who have built on the same Rock, and had the same promises to be their succor. They cried, “Victory!” So shall I, and after that die quietly and in peace. If the same transporting scene may not be mine, I will at least lay my head upon my Savior’s bosom, and breathe my life out gently there.

You have a right, Christian, to expect that as other Christians die, so shall you. How will you die? Why, you will die as your sainted mother did; you will die as your father did; when the time came for the “silver cord to be loosed and the



golden bowl to be broken, for the pitcher to be broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern,” the pitcher was broken and the cord loosed, and their spirits went to God who gave them. How will you die? Why, as I mused on this, I took down my little book of *“Promises,”* for I thought I shall certainly do as God says I shall. Well, how is that? “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you.” And again, “Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And again, “He shall swallow up death in victory.” And again, “He shall make all your bed in your sickness.” And yet again, “Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” You know what a many dying pillows God has made for His dear people in the hour of their departure. “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, manfully, patiently, if God shall keep His promise, as we know He will.

Now, let me speak to you all again—I mean you that who are in Christ. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, you will do as a man does who has had a long day’s walk, and he can see his home. You will clap your hands. You will sit down upon the next milestone with tears in your eyes, and wipe the sweat from your face and say, “It is well, it is over. Oh how happy it is to see my own roof-tree and the place where my best friends, my kindred dwell. I shall soon be at home—at home forever with the Lord.” How will you do? Why you will do as a soldier does when the battle is fought; he takes off his armor, stretches himself out at length to rest. The battle is all over. He forgets his wounds, and reckons up the glory of the victory and the reward which follows. So will we. We will begin to forget the wounds and the garments rolled in blood, and we will think of the “crown of life that fades not away.” “How will we do in the swelling of Jordan?” We will do as men do when they launch for a foreign country. They look back upon those they

leave behind, and wave their handkerchiefs as long as they can see them—but they are soon gone. And we will bid adieu to dear ones; they shall have the tears, but we shall have the joy, for we go to the islands of the blest, the land of the hereafter, the home of the sanctified, to dwell with God forever! Who will weep when he starts on such a voyage, and launches on such a blessed sea? What will we do when we come into the swelling of Jordan? Why I think, dear friends, we shall then begin to see through the veil, and to enjoy the paradise of the blessed which is ours forever. We will make that dying bed a throne, and we will sit and reign there with Christ Jesus.

We will think of that river Jordan as being one tributary of the river of life which flows at the foot of the jasper throne of the Most High! We will live in the land of Beulah on the edge of Jordan, with our feet in the cold stream, singing of the better land. We will hear the songs of angels as celestial breezes bring them across the narrow stream. And sometimes, we will have in our bosom, some of the spices from the mountains of myrrh which Christ shall give us across the river. And when we come to die, what will we do in the swelling of Jordan? Why we will try and bear our dying testimony—

“My joyful soul on Jordan’s shore,  
Shall raise one Ebenezer more.”

Oh, that was a grand thing when Joshua said to the 12 men, “Take up twelve stones, and set them down in the midst of Jordan where the priests’ feet stood still, and take up 12 other stones, and set them up on the other side of Jordan, where the children of Israel first trod the promised shore.” You and I will do this—we will leave 12 stones in the midst of Jordan. They shall tell our friends and kindred here of the good words we said, the adieu we gave them, and the joyful hopes which

cheered us—the song we sang when death began to stay our throat. And then, we will raise another Ebenezer in heaven. There shall be 12 stones there that will tell the angels and the principalities of the love which cleft the Jordan, and brought us through it as on dry land. This is how we will do in the swelling of Jordan. We are not looking forward to death with any fear, with any dread. When we get home tonight, we shall begin to take off our garments, one by one. We shall not shed a tear. Nor shall we when we come to die—

“Since Jesus is mine, I will not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay;  
To die in the Lord is a comfort and blessing,  
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way!”

This is how we shall do in the swelling of Jordan. Take off our garments to put on the celestial robes. As the bridegroom longs for the marriage day, and as the bride waits until she is joined unto her husband in wedlock, even so our spirits wait for God. As the exile pants to be delivered, and the galley slave to be separated from his oar, so we wait to be set free for glory and immortality! As she that mourns her absent lord pines for his return, as the child longs to reach his father's house and to see his father's face, so do we—

“My heart is with Him on His throne,  
And ill can brook delay,  
Each moment listening for His voice,  
‘Make haste and come away.’”

I must finish, for time has gone. But I meant to have said a word or two by way of *warning*. I can only do so now briefly, abridging them and compressing the thoughts as tightly as I can.

“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” may well be used by way of warning. I think, dear friends, you ought to ask yourselves one question. Some of you never think of dying, and yet you should. You say you may live long—you may, and you may not. If there were a great number of loaves upon this table, and you were to eat one every day, and if you were told that one of those loaves had poison in it, I think you would begin every one with great caution; and knowing that one of them would be your death, you would take each up with silent dread. Now, you have so many days, and in one of these days, there is the poison of death. I do not know which one. It may be tomorrow; it may not be until many a day has gone. But I think you ought to handle all your days with holy jealousy. Is not that a fair parable? If it is, then let me ask you to think upon the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” You grant that you will die, and you may die soon. Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do at last?

A man goes into an inn, and as soon as he sits down, he begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed; there is no delicacy in season which he forgets to request, there is no luxury which he denies himself. He stays at the inn for some time. By-and-by, there comes the bill, and he says, “Oh, I never thought of that—I never thought of that!” “Why,” says the landlord, “here is a man who is either a born fool or else a thief! What? Never thought of the reckoning—never thought of settling-day!” And yet this is how some of you live! You have this and that, and the other thing in this world’s inn, (for it is nothing but an inn), and you have soon to go your way, and yet you have never thought of settling-day! “Well,” says one, “I was casting up my accounts this morning.” Yes, I remember a minister making this remark when he heard of one that cast up his accounts on Sunday. He said, “I hope that is not true, sir.” “Yes,” he said,

“I do cast up my accounts on Sunday.” “Ah, well,” he said, “the Day of Judgment will be spent in a similar manner—in casting up accounts, and it will go ill with those people who found no other time in which to serve themselves except the time which was given them that they serve God.” You have either been a dishonest man, or else you must be supremely foolish to be spending every day in this world’s inn, and yet to be ignoring the thought of the Great Day of Account! But remember, though you forget it, God forgets not. Every day is adding to the score. Photographed in heaven is every action that you perform. Your very thoughts are photographed upon the eternal mind; and in the day when the book shall be opened, it will go ill with you.

Perhaps you will say, as one did in the book of Kings, “Well, I was busy here and there; I was looking after my family and my property; I was looking after politics; I was seeing after such-and-such an investment; and my soul is gone.” Yes, but that would not bring it back again. And what shall it profit you, though you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? It is no business of mine what becomes of you, except this—I do desire to talk with you at all times, that if you perish it may not be laid at *my* door. What would you say to that soldier who should be told by his commanding officer to fight with the foe on the field of battle, and the so-called soldier were to reply, “I don’t know anything about battle or fighting; I never thought of the battlefield, I can do anything but fight”? The general would be sorely amazed. He would want to know what the soldier lived for, if it were not to fight and defend his country in the hour of his country’s need. What do we live for, if it is not to prepare for a hereafter life, and for the day for which all days were made? What? Are we sent into this world, and told that we are to, “Prepare to meet our God,” and we do everything else but that one thing—this will not be wise; and

when the Lord of the whole earth shall come out of His place to judge the sons of men, bitterly shall we rue our folly! Be wise now, remember this, and consider your latter end. What words shall I use to urge you to consider the subject and take my warning? Is heaven a place you would like to enter? Is hell a place you would like to avoid, or will you make your bed in it forever? Are you in love with eternal misery that you run to it so madly? Oh, stop! Turn! Turn! Why will you die? I do pray you stop and consider. Consideration does no man harm. Second thoughts here are for the best. Think and think, and think again, and oh, may God lead you, through thinking, to feel your danger, and may you then accept that gracious remedy which is in Christ Jesus; for whoever believes in Him is not condemned, whoever trusts in Christ is saved. Sin is forgiven, the soul is accepted, the spirit is blessed the moment it trusts the Savior.

Before I close the subject, I must guide your thoughts to what is the true preparation for death. Three things present themselves to my mind as being our duty in connection with the dying hour. First, seek to be washed in the Red Sea of the dear Redeemer's blood, come in contact with the death of Christ, and by faith in it, you will be prepared to meet your own. Without giving an opinion upon the merit of that system of medicine which professes to cure diseases by producing an effect upon the system akin to the original malady, or as they put it, "like curing like," we recommend it in *spiritual* things; come into union with Christ's death, and that will take away the evil and sting of your own. Be buried with Him in baptism unto death, and have part with Him in the reality symbolized in that blest ordinance, and you will not dread Jordan's swellings if the full tide of the Redeemer's blood has rolled over you so that you are washed and clean. If guilt is on your conscience, it will be as a millstone round your neck, and you will sink to endless

woe; but if the love of Jesus is in your heart, it will buoy up your head and keep you safe, so that although heart and flesh fail you, you will have God to be the strength of your heart and your portion forever! Again, learn of the apostle Paul to “die daily.” Practice the duty of self-denial and mortifying of the flesh till it shall become a habit with you, and when you have to lay down the flesh and part with everything, you will be only continuing the course of life you have pursued all along. No wonder if dying should prove hard work if you are completely unused to it in thought and expectation! If death comes to me as a stranger, I may be startled, but if I have prepared myself to receive him, he may come and knock at my door and I shall say, “I am ready to go with you, for I have been expecting you all my life.”

How beautiful this expression of the apostle, “I am ready to be offered up and the time of my departure is at hand.” He was waiting for death as for a friend, and when it came, I am sure he was well pleased to go. He tells us he had “a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” Even so, may we learn to look at the time when we shall hear the summons, “Come up higher,” as to a time to be longed for rather than dreaded. Learn to submit your will to God’s will daily. Learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross, so that when the last conflict comes, it may find you able, by the grace of God, to bear the brunt of the final contest with unflinching courage. And as the last preparation for the end of life, I would advise a continual course of active service and obedience to the commands of God. I have frequently thought that no happier place to die in could be found than one’s post of duty. If I were a soldier, I think I would like to die as Wolfe died, with victory shouting in my ear, or as Nelson died in the midst of his greatest success. Preparation for death does not mean going alone into the chamber and retiring from the world, but active

service—"Doing the duty of the day in the day." The best preparation for sleep, the healthiest sedative, is hard work, and one of the best things to prepare us for sleeping in Jesus, is to live in Him an active life of going about doing good. The attitude in which I wish death to find me is, with light trimmed, and loins girt—waiting and watching—at work, doing my allotted task, and multiplying my talent for the Master's glory. Idlers may not anticipate rest, but workers will not be unwilling to welcome the hour which shall hear the words, "It is finished."

Keep your eye upon the recompense of the reward. Lay up treasures in heaven, and thus you will be ready to cross the stream and enter the beloved land, where heart and treasure have gone beforehand, to prepare the way. Washed in the blood of Christ, accustomed to submit to whatever God wills, and to find our pleasure in doing His will on earth as we hope to do it in heaven, joined to a life of holy service, I am persuaded that we shall be prepared with one of old to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and with him, calmly and joyfully, to anticipate the crown which fades not away. God bring you to this point, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## TO MY READERS

**DEAR FRIENDS,** Refreshed in body and mind, I am on my way homeward to my pulpit and my work. I trust that my absence from labor, so profitable to my own health, may prove to be no loss to you from the stores which I have gathered in my traveling. It is no small strain upon a man's mental powers to preach to the same people, and to publish the sermons for 11 years consecutively; in time the mind which continually labors, ceases to be fresh and vigorous, and craves for rest. The



soil without fallow grows poor. Rest is true medicine. That rest, I bless God, I have been enabled to enjoy in the most agreeable and instructive manner, and trust that it will enable me, by divine assistance, to avoid the sameness and repetition which are sure signs of exhaustion of mind, and poverty of thought. To be in the very best condition to be used of God is my heart's desire; I would be a bow well-strung; an arrow sharpened by the King. He who works for God should seek to do his work well, and should strive to be fit for labor. To feed the saints and gather in Christ's blood-bought wanderers is my highest ambition resting or working—my eye is on this.

The most indefatigable must sometimes submit to rest in order to avoid being laid aside altogether. But work is the happiest and best state for believers, and I feel that it is so. Oh that we, like the spirits before the throne, could serve God day and night without sin or ceasing! May I beg a continued interest in my readers' earnest prayers, and may I hope that if ever they receive a blessing in reading my discourses, they will kindly introduce them to their friends and neighbors.

Yours to serve in the Gospel,

***C. H. SPURGEON.***

**Bell Alp, Switzerland, June 16th, 1865.**

## 636 THE CHURCH'S LOVE TO HER LOVING GOD – SONG. 1:7

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed,  
where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be  
as one who turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?”—  
Song of Solomon 1:7

WE SHALL NEED to lift up our hearts to God and ask to be quickened in divine grace, or the precious truths in our text will not prove to us “as honey out of the rock,” nor the “least of fat things, of wine and marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” We cannot appreciate the spirituality of this book unless God’s Spirit shall help us. Many read these words and only see a proof of the imaginative power of an Eastern mind. Some read to scoff and blaspheme, and others, even good people, neglect to read this book altogether, being unable to drink in its spirit because of their need of that higher life of communion with the Beloved, which is here so beautifully laid open to our view. Now I am persuaded of better things of you, beloved. I am sure that you believe that every Word of God is precious, and most certainly we say of this book, “It is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the droppings of the honeycomb.” This book of the canticles is most precious to us. It is the inner court of the temple of truth. It seems to us to belong to the secret place of the tabernacle of

the Most High. We see our Savior's face in almost every page of the Bible, but here we see His heart and feel His love to us. We shall hope this morning to speak of our own experience, as well as of the church who is here speaking. You will perceive that she begins with a title, she expresses a desire, she enforces it with an argument—"Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one who turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?"

I. We commence with the title—"O You whom my soul loves." It is well to be able to call the Lord Jesus Christ by this name without an "If," or a, "But." A very large proportion of Christian people can only say of Christ that they *hope* they love Him; they *trust* they love Him; but this is a very poor and shallow experience which is content to stay here. It seems to me that no one ought to give any rest to his spirit, till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We are not content to have a hope of the love of our parents, or of our spouse, or of our children; we feel we must be certain there; and we ought not to be satisfied with a hope that Christ loves us, and with a bare trust that we love Him. The old saints did not generally speak with buts, and ifs, and hopes, and trusts, but they spoke positively and plainly. "I know whom I have believed," says Paul. "I know that my Redeemer lives," says Job. "He whom my soul loves," says Solomon, in the song as we have it here. Learn, dear friends, to get that positive knowledge of your love to Jesus, and be not satisfied till you can talk about your interest in Him as a *reality*, which you have made infallibly sure, by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and His seal upon your soul by faith, that you are born of God, and belong to Christ.

Speaking, then, of this title which rings the great bell of love to Jesus, let us notice first the *cause*, and secondly the *effect*,

of that love. If we can look into the face of Him who once sweat great drops of blood, and call Him, “O You whom my soul loves,” it is interesting, to consider what is the cause of our love. And here our reply is very quick. The *efficient cause* of our love is the Holy Spirit of God. We would never have had a spark of love to Jesus if it had not been bestowed upon us by the divine worker. Well said John, “Love is of God.” Certainly it is so. Our love to Christ is one beam from Himself, the Sun. Certainly a man can no more naturally love Christ than a horse can fly. I grant you there is no physical disability, but there is a moral and spiritual disability which effectually disqualifies him from the high and lofty emotion of love to Jesus. Into that dead corpse the living spirit must be breathed; for those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot love Christ. That heart of stone must be transformed into a heart of flesh, for stones may be hurled at the Savior, but they can never love Him. That lion must become a lamb, or it can never claim Christ as its Shepherd. That raven must be turned into a dove, or it will never fly to Christ as its Ark. “Except a man is born again,” we may say, he cannot see this precious sparkling jewel of the kingdom of God, love to Christ. Search yourselves then, brethren, do you love Him or not? If you love Him, you have been born-again! And if you do not love Him, then you are still in darkness, and are not His—

“Can you pronounce His charming name,  
His acts of kindness tell;  
And while you dwell upon the theme,  
No sweet emotion feel?”

I think some of us would have to answer—

“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,  
Had I no love to Thee;  
Sooner than not my Savior love,  
Oh, may I cease to be!”

This, then, is the efficient cause—the Holy Spirit. The *rational cause*, the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in Himself—in His looks, in His present working, and in His person, besides many other little fountains, which all tend to swell the river—the growing, deepening river of our love to Him. Why do we love Jesus? We have the best of answers—*because He first loved us!* Listen you strangers who inquire why we should love the Savior so. We will give you such reasons that we will satisfy you, and set your mouths watering to be partakers of the same reasons, that you may come to love Him, too! Why do we love Him? Because before this round earth was fashioned between the palms of the great Creator—before He had painted the rainbow, or hung out the lights of the sun and moon, Christ’s delights were with us. He foresaw us through the glass of His prescience; He knew what we should be—looked into the book in which all His “members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.” And as He looked upon us, the glance was love. He delighted to sit upon the throne of glory, and to remember His dear ones who were yet to be born. It was the great prospect which His mighty and infinite Spirit had—a joy that was set before Him—that He should see a multitude that no man could number who should be His beloved forever—

“Loved of my Christ, for Him again,  
With love intense I’ll burn;  
Chosen of You before time began,  
I choose You in return.”

Oh, could you know that Jesus had loved you from before all worlds, you must love Him! At least you will grant there cannot be a better reason for love than love. Love demands—no, it does not demand—it takes by almighty force, by irresistible energy, that heart captive upon whom it thus sets itself.

This Jesus loved us for no reason whatever in ourselves. We were black as the tents of Kedar; we had much deformity but no beauty and yet He loved us; and our deformity was of such a kind that it might meritoriously have made Him hate us. We kicked against Him and despised Him. Our language naturally was, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” and when we heard of His loving us, we sneered at it. He was despised and rejected of men; we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. We thought His love an empty tale, a paltry trifle, and yet He loved us. No, we were His enemies. We slew Him; we confess with sorrow that we were the murderers of the Prince of Life and Glory. Our hands were stained with His gore, and our garments dyed with His blood, and yet He saw all this and still loved us! Shall we not love Him? Surely our heart is harder than adamant, because we do not love Him more. But it were hell-hardened steel if it did not love at all. Our Savior so loved us that He stripped Himself of His robes of radiance. Listen, you children of God, it is the old story over again, but it is always new to you. He stripped Himself of His bright array, He laid aside His scepter and His crown, and became an infant in Bethlehem’s manger among the horned oxen. Thirty years of poverty and shame the King of heaven spent among the sons of men, and all out of love to us! Jesus the heavenly lover, panting to redeem His people, was content to abide here without a place to rest His head that, He might rescue us! Do you see Him yonder in

the garden in His agony? His soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death! His forehead, no, His head, His hair, His garments red with bloody sweat; do you see Him giving His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them who pluck off His hair? See Him as He hides not His face from shame and spitting—dumb like a sheep before her shearers, and like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, so He opened not His mouth, but patiently bore it all on our behalf. See Him with the cross upon His mangled shoulders, staggering through Jerusalem's streets, unwept, unpitied, except by poor feeble women!

See Him, you who love Him, and love Him more as He stretches out His hands to the nails, and gives His feet to the iron. See Him, as with power to deliver Himself, He is made captive. Behold Him as they lift up the cross with Him upon it, and dash it down into its place and dislocate His bones. Hear that cry, "I am poured out like water: all My bones are out of joint. You have brought Me into the dust of death." Stand, if you can, and view that face so full of grief. Look till a sword shall go through your own heart as it went through His virgin mother's very soul. Oh, see Him as He thirsts and has that thirst mocked with vinegar. Hear Him as He prays and has that prayer parodied, "He cries for Elijah, let Elijah come and take Him down." See Him, as they who love Him come and kiss His feet and bathe them with their tears. Will you not love Him, who did all that friend could do for friend? He who gave His life for us? Beloved, here are a thousand crimson cords that tie us to the Savior, and I hope we feel their constraining power. It is His vast love, the old eternal bond, the love which redeemed, which suffered in our place, the love which pleaded our cause before the eternal throne—it is this which we give as a sufficient reason why we should love the Savior, if necessary, even unto death!

Moreover, we have another reason. I trust many here can say that they love the Savior because of *His present dealings towards them*. What has He not done for us this very day? Some of you came here this morning heavy and you went away rejoicing! Perhaps you have had answers to prayer this very week. You have passed through the furnace and not a smell of fire has passed upon you. You have had many sins this week, but you have felt the efficacy of His blood again and again. Some of us have known what it is during the past six days to have the ravishing delights of private communion with Him. He has made us glad; our spirits have leaped for very joy, for He has turned again the captivity of our soul. You have drunk of Him as of “the brook by the way,” and you have therefore lifted up your head. Beloved, if there were nothing else which Christ had done for my soul, that which I have tasted and handled of Him within the last few months would make me love Him forever, and I know that you can say the same!

Nor is this all. We love the Savior because of *the excellence of His person*. We are not blind to excellence anywhere, but still we can see no excellence like His—

“Jesus You fairest, dearest one,  
What beauties You adorn!  
Far brighter than the noonday sun,  
Or star that gilds the morn.  
Here let me fix my wandering eyes,  
And all Your glories trace;  
Till, in the world of endless joys,  
I rise to Your embrace.”

When Tigranes and his wife were both taken prisoners by Cyrus, Cyrus turning to Tigranes said, “What will you give for the liberation of your wife?” And the King answered, “I love



my wife so that I would cheerfully give up my life if she might be delivered from servitude.” Whereupon Cyrus said that if there was such love as that between them, they might both go free. So when they were away and many were talking about the beauty and generosity of Cyrus, and especially about the beauty of his person, Tigranes, turning to his wife, asked her what she thought of Cyrus, and she answered that she saw nothing anywhere but in the face of the man who had said that he would die if she might only be released from servitude. “The beauty of that man,” she said, “makes me forget all others.” And verily we would say the same of Jesus. We would not decry the angels, nor think ill of the saints—but the beauties of that Man who gave His life for us, are so great that they have eclipsed all others, and our soul only wishes to see Him and none other, for as the stars hide their heads in the presence of the sun, so may your all be gone, you delights, you excellences, when Christ Jesus, the Chief Delight, the Chief Excellency, makes His appearance. Dr. Watts says—

“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole earth would love Him, too.”

And so it seems to us. Could you see Him, you must love Him. It was said of Henry VIII that if all the portraits of tyrants, and murderers, and thieves were out of existence, they might all be painted from the one face of Henry VIII. And turning that round another way, we will say that if all the excellences, beauties, and perfections of the human race were blotted out, they might all be painted again from the face of the Lord Jesus—

“All over glorious is my Lord.  
He must be beloved, and yet adored.”

These are some of the reasons why our heart loves Jesus. Before I leave those reasons, I should like to put a few questions round among this great crowd. O friends, would you not love Jesus if you knew something of this love as shed abroad in your hearts—something of this love as being yours? Now, remember, there is a very great promise that Christ has made, and it is this—“He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Now what does that refer to? Why to any, “He,” or, “She,” in all the world who comes to Christ. Whoever you may be, if you come to Jesus—and you know that means just trusting Him, leaning upon Him—if you come to Him, He will not cast you out; and when He has received you to His bosom, you will then know, (but you cannot know till then), how much He loves you, and then, I think, you will say with us, “Yes, His name is, ‘You whom my soul loves.’”

I shall now, for a short time speak on the effects of this love, as we have dwelt on the cause of it. When a man has true love to Christ, it is sure to lead him to dedication. There is a natural desire to give something to the person whom we love and true love to Jesus compels us to give ourselves to Him. One of the earliest acts of the Christian's life is to take ourselves and lay body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of consecration, saying, “Here I am. I give myself to You.” When the pupils of Socrates had nearly all of them given him a present, there was one of the best scholars who was extremely poor and he said to Socrates, “I have none of these things which the others have presented to you. But, O Socrates, I give you myself.” Whereupon Socrates said it was the best present he had had that day. “My Son, give me your heart”—this is what Jesus asks. If you love Him, you must give Him this.

True love next shows itself in *obedience*. If I love Jesus, I shall do as He bids me. He is my Husband, my Lord—I call

Him, “Master.” “If you love Me,” He says, “keep My commandments.” This is His chosen proof of my love, and I am sure, if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments. And yet, there are some who profess to love Christ who very seldom think of keeping any of His commandments. “This do in remembrance of Me,” He says, and yet some of you never come to His table. May I gently ask you how you make this disobedience consort with genuine affection for Him? “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”—

“’Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”

We can do anything for those we love, and, if we love Jesus, no burden will be heavy, no difficulty will be great—we should rather wish to do more than He asks of us, and only desire that He were a little more exacting that we might have a better opportunity of showing forth our affection.

True love, again, is always *considerate* and afraid lest it should give offense. It walks very daintily. If I love Jesus, I shall watch my eyes, my heart, my tongue, my hands—being so fearful lest I should wake my Beloved—or make Him stir until He pleases; And I shall be sure not to take in those bad guests, those ill-favored guests of pride and sloth, and love of the world. I shall tell them to be packing, for I have a dear One within, who will not tarry long if He sees me giving glances to these wicked ones.

My heart shall be wholly His. He shall sit at the head of the table, He shall have the best dishes, no, I will send all others away that I may have Him all to myself, and that He may have my whole heart, all that I am, and all that I have.

Again, true love to Christ will make us *very jealous* of His honor. As Queen Eleanor went down upon her knees to suck the poison from her husband's wound, so we shall put our lips

to the wound of Christ when He has been stabbed with the dagger of slander, or inconsistency. We shall be willing sooner to take the poison ourselves, and to be ourselves diseased and despised than that His name, *His cross* should suffer ill! Oh, what matters it what becomes of us if the King reigns? I will go home to my bed, and die in peace, if the King sits on the throne. Let me see King David once again installed in Zion's sacred halls, and my soul, in poverty and shame, shall still rejoice if the banished King Jesus shall once again come back, and have His own, and take His scepter, and wear His crown! Beloved, I trust we can say we would not mind if Christ would make a door mat of us, if He would wipe His Church's filthy sandals on us, if we might but help to make her pure! We would hold the stirrup for Him to mount any day, yes, and be His horse-block that He might mount His glorious charger, and ride forth conquering and to conquer. Say, what matters it *what* we are, or *where* we are, if the King has His own?

If we love Christ, again, we shall be *desiring to promote His cause*, and we shall be desiring to promote it ourselves. We shall wish to see the strength of the mighty turned at the gate, that King Jesus may return triumphant; We shall not wish to sit still while our brethren go to war, but we shall want to take our portion in the fray, that like soldiers who love their monarch, we may prove by our wounds and by our sufferings that our love is real. The apostle says, "Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth." Actions speak louder than words, and we shall always be anxious to tell our love in deeds as well as by our lips. The true disciple asks continually, "Lord what will You have me to do?" He esteems it his highest honor to serve the Lord. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."—

“There’s not a lamb in all the flock,  
I would disdain to feed;  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead.  
Would not my ardent spirit vie  
With angels round Your throne,  
To execute Your sacred will  
And make Your glory known?”

Yes, indeed, we thus can sing, and mean, I trust, every word; yes, we will go forth into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. We will tell of this love to all, and labor to win for the Master’s honor, a multitude which no man can number out of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue, and people! I believe in an active love—a love which has hands to labor and feet to run, as well as a heart to feel, eyes to glance, and ears to listen. A mother’s love is of the purest and most intense sort in the world, and it is the most practical. It shows itself in deeds of untiring devotion both night and day. So also should it be with us—we should let our affections prompt us to life-long labor. The love of Christ should compel us to live, and if necessary die to serve Him. Heaven is the place of purest, holiest attachment to Christ; then we shall understand most about His love to us, and of all He has done to prove it and the consequence will be that His servants shall serve Him day and night in His holy temple. We are expecting a home in glory not of idleness, but of continual activity. It is written, “His servants shall serve Him,” and we are taught to pray now that we may do His will on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us, therefore, each one, be busily engaged in the great harvest. The harvest is great and the laborers are few. There is room for all, and each man’s place is waiting to receive him. If we truly love our Lord, we shall at once press to the front and begin the “work of faith

and labor of love.” Has not the Master been known to show His love to us in deeds? Look to Bethlehem, to Gabbatha, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha—yes, look to His whole life as He “went about doing good,” and see if all this will not stir you up to service! Listen to the life story of the Lord, and you will hear a voice from each one of His deeds of love saying to you, “Go and do likewise.”

And, once again, if we love Jesus we shall be *willing to suffer for Him*. Pain will become light; we shall sing with Madame Guyon—

“To me ’tis equal whether love ordain my life or death,  
Appoint me ease, or pain.”

It is a high attainment to come to, but love can make us think ourselves of so small import that if Christ can serve Himself of us, we shall make no choice as to what, or where we may be. We can sing once more—

“Would not my heart pour forth its blood  
In honor of Your name,  
And challenge the cold hand of death  
To dampen this immortal flame?”

Our hearts are, I trust, so full of real devotion to Christ, that we can give Him everything, and endure all things for His sake. Cannot we say—

“For Him I count as gain each loss,  
Disgrace for Him renown,  
Well may I glory in His cross,  
While He prepares my crown”?

Darkness is light about us if we can serve Him there. The bitter is sweet if the cup is put to our lips in order that we may share in His sufferings, and prove ourselves to be His followers. When Ignatius was led to his martyrdom, as he contemplated the nearness of his death and suffering, he said, “Now I begin to be a Christian.” He felt that all that he had done and suffered before was not enough to entitle him to be called a follower of Christ—but now as the Master’s bloody baptism was before him, he realized the truth of God so dear to every right-minded Christian—that he was to be “like unto his Lord.” Here we can all prove our love! We can suffer His will calmly if we are not able *to do it publicly*—

“Weak as I am, yet through Your love,  
I all things can perform.  
And, smiling, triumph in Your name  
Amid the raging storm.”

I pray God we may have such a love that thirsts after Jesus, and cannot be satisfied without present communion with Him.

**II.** This brings me to the thought, which I shall only touch upon as the swallow skims the brook with his wings, and then up and away, lest I weary you. The second point of consideration is the **DESIRE OF THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**—having called Him by His title, she now expresses her longing to be with Him. “Tell me, O You Whom my soul loves, where You feed, where you make Your flock to rest at noon.”

The desire of a renewed soul is to find Christ and to be with Him. Stale meats left over from yesterday are very well when there is nothing else, but who does not like hot food fresh from the fire? And past communion with Christ is very well. “I remember You from the land of the Hermonites and the hill

Mizar,” but these are only stale meats, and a loving soul needs fresh food every day from the table of Christ, and you who have once had the kisses of His mouth, though you remember the past kisses with delight, yet need daily fresh tokens of His love. He who drinks of this water will never thirst again, it is true, except for *this water*, and then he *will* so thirst for *it*, that he will be like Samuel Rutherford, who began to be out of heart with the buckets—he wanted to get right to the wellhead that he might lie down and drink—and then, if he could have his fill, he would drink the well quite dry. But there is no hope of that, or rather no fear of it—the well can never be empty, for it rises as we drink!

A true loving soul, then, needs present communion with Christ. So the question is, “Tell me where You feed? Where do You get Your comfort from, O Jesus? I will go there. Where do Your thoughts go? To Your cross? Do You look back to that? Then I will go there. Where You feed, there will I feed.”

Or does this mean actively, instead of being in the passive or the neuter? Where do You feed Your flock? In *Your house*? I will go there, if I may find You there. In private *prayer*? Then I will not be slack in that. In the *Word*? Then I will read it night and day. Tell me where You feed, for wherever You stand as the Shepherd, there will I be, for I need You. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from You. My soul hungers and thirsts to be with You. She puts it again, “Where do You make Your flock to rest at noon,” for there is only rest in one place—where You cause Your flock to rest at noon. That must be a grace-given rest, and only to be found in some one chosen place. Where is the shadow of that rock? It is very hot just now here in the middle of summer, when the sun is pouring down his glorious rays like bright but sharp arrows upon us, and we, who are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brown bricks and mortar, often recollect those glades where the woods grow



thick, and where the waters leap from crag to crag down the hillside, and where the birds are singing among the trees. We delight to think of those leafy bowers where the sun cannot dart his rays, where, on some mossy bank, we may stretch ourselves to rest, or have our weary limbs in some cool stream; and this is just what the spouse is after. She feels the heat of the world's sun, and she longs to be away from its cares and troubles that have furrowed and made her face brown till she looked as if she had been a busy keeper of the vineyards. She needs to get away to hold quiet communion with her Lord, for He is the brook where the weary may lay their wearied limbs; He is that sheltered nook, that shadow of the great rock in the weary land where His people may lie down and be at peace—

“Jesus, the very thought of You,  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Your face to see  
And in Your presence rest.  
For those who find You find a bliss,  
Nor tongue, nor pen can show,  
The love of Jesus, what it is,  
None but His loved ones know.”

Now do you not want this tonight? Do not your souls need Christ tonight? My brethren, there is something wrong with us if we can do without Christ. If we love Him, we must want Him. Our hearts ever say—

“Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without You I cannot live!  
Abide with me when night is nigh,  
For without You I dare not die.”

No, we cannot do without Christ; we must have Him. “Give me Christ, or else I die,” is the cry of our souls. No wonder Mary Magdalene wept when she thought they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him. As the body suffers without food, so will suffer we without Christ. As the fish perish out of water, so will we apart from Christ. I must quote another verse of a hymn, for really the sweet songsters of Israel have lavished all their best prose, and very rightly so, to tell for us our lovetale concerning our Beloved. I am sure that our heart’s inner voice can set to sweetest music the words—

“Oh that I could forever sit  
With Mary at the Master’s feet—  
Be this my happy choice  
My only care, delight and bliss,  
My joy, my heaven on earth be this,  
To hear the Bridegroom’s voice.”

Yes! To be with Jesus is heaven—anywhere on earth, or in the skies—all else is wilderness and desert. It is paradise to be with Him; and heaven without Christ would be no heaven to me. My heart cannot rest away from Him. To have no Christ would be a punishment greater than I could bear! I should wander, like another Cain over the earth, a fugitive and a vagabond. Verily there would be no peace for my soul. I am sure that the true wife, if her husband is called to go upon a journey, longs ardently for his return. If he is gone to the wars, she dreads lest he should fall. How each letter comes perfumed to her when it tells of his love and constancy, and how she watches for the day when she shall clasp him in her arms once more. Oh you know that when you were children, if you were sent to school, how you counted till the holidays came on. I

had a little almanac, and marked out every day the night before, and so counted one day less till the time I should get home again, and so may you—

“May not a captive long  
his own dear land to see?  
May not the prisoner seek release  
from bondage to be free?”

Of course he may, and so may you, beloved, pant and sigh as the hart pants for the water brooks—for the comfortable enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ's presence.

### III. THE ARGUMENT USED BY THE CHURCH.

Here is the desire. Now, to close, she backs that up with an argument. She says, “Why should I be as one who turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” You have plenty of companions—why should I be turned aside? Why should I not be one? Let us talk it over. Why should I lose my Lord's presence? But the devil tells me I am a great sinner. Ah, but it is all washed away, and gone forever. That cannot separate me, for it does not exist. My sin is buried—

“Plunged as in a shoreless sea—  
Lost as in immensity.”

The devil tells me I am unworthy, and that is a reason. But I was always unworthy, and yet it was no reason why He should not love me at first, and therefore cannot be a reason why I should not have fellowship with Him now! Why should I be left out? Now I am going to speak for the poorest here—I do not know where he is. I want to speak for you that have the least faith; you who think yourselves the smallest in all Israel;

you are Mephibosheths who are lame in your feet, and yet sit at the King's table. You are poor despised Mordecais who sit at the king's gate, yet cannot get inside the palace. I have this to say to you—Why should you be left there? Just try and reason a bit, “Why should I, Jesus, be left out in the cold, when the night comes on? No, there is a cot for the little one, as well as a bed for his bigger brother. Why should *I* be turned aside? I am equally bought with a price. I cost You, in order to save me, as much as the noblest of the saints—You bought *them* with blood—You could not buy *me* with less. I must have been loved as much, or else, seeing that I am of so little worth, I would not have been redeemed at all! If there is any difference, perhaps I am loved somewhat more! Is there not greater, better love shown in the choice of *me* than of some who are more worthy than I am? Why, then, should I be left out? I know if I have a child who is deformed, I love it all the more—it seems as if I had a more tender care for it. Then why should You, my heavenly Father, be less kind to me than I should be to my offspring? Why should *I* be turned aside? You chose me—You cannot change Your mind! Why, then, should You cast me off? You knew what I was when You chose me—You cannot, therefore, find any fresh reason for turning me aside. You foresaw I should misbehave myself, and yet You selected me; well, then, there cannot be a reason why I should be left to fall away.”

Again, I ask, Why should I turn aside? I am a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones— and though I am less than the least of all His saints, yet He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Why should I turn aside? I have a promise all to myself. Has He not said, “I will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed”? Has He not said, “The Lord takes pleasure in them who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy”? If I cannot do more, I can do that! I *do*

hope in His mercy; then why should I be turned aside? If any should think of doing so, it should not be I, for I want to be near Him! I am such a poor plant that I ought to be kept in the sun—I shall never do in the shade. My big brother, perhaps, may manage for a little time without comfort, but I cannot, for I am one of the Ready-to-Halts. I recollect how the shepherds of Mount Clear said, “Come in, Mr. Little-Faith; Come in, Mr. Feeble-Mind; Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt; Come in, Mary!” But they did not say, “Come in, Father Faithful; Come in, Matthew; Come in, Valiant-for-Truth.” No, they said these might do as they liked; they were quite sure to take their own part—but they looked first to the most feeble! Then why should I be turned aside? I am the feeblest, and need His person most. I may use my very feebleness and proneness to fall as the reason why I should come to Him! Why should I be turned aside? I may fall into sin. My heart may grow cold without His glorious presence—and then, what if I should perish! Why, here let me think. If I am the meanest lamb in His flock, I cannot perish without doing the God of heaven damage. Let me say it again with reverence. If I, the least of His children, perish, I shall do His Son dishonor, for what will the arch-fiend say? “Aha,” says he, “You surety of the covenant, You could keep the *strong*, but You could not keep the *weak*—I have this lamb here in the pit whom You could not preserve! Here is one of Your crown jewels,” he says, “and though he is none of the brightest; though he is not the most sparkling ruby in Your coronet; yet he is one of Your jewels, and I have him here in hell! You have no perfect regalia—I have a part of it here.” Shall that ever be, after Christ has said, “They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand”? Shall this be, when the strong arm of God is engaged for my succor, and He has said to me, “The eternal God is your refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms”? Jesus, turn me not aside,

lest by my fall I grieve Your Spirit, and lest by my fall I bring  
disgrace upon Your name!

Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should.  
Come my soul, there are a thousand reasons why you should  
not! Jesus beckons you to come. You wounded saints, you who  
have slipped to your falling—you who are grieved, sorrowing  
and distressed—come to His cross! Come to His throne again!  
Backsliders, if you have been such, return! Return! Return! A  
husband's heart has no door to keep out his spouse, and Jesus'  
heart has no power to keep out His people! Return! Return!  
There is no divorce sued out against you, for the Lord, the God  
of Jacob says He hates putting away. Return! Return! Let us get  
to our chambers, let us seek renewed fellowship; and, oh, you  
who have never had it, and have never seen Christ, may you  
thirst after Him tonight, and if you do, remember the text I  
gave you, "He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."  
Whoever you may be, if you will come to Jesus, He will not cast  
you out—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come."

God bring you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## 637 THE DOVE'S RETURN TO THE ARK – GEN. 8:9

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 2nd, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” — Genesis 8:9

THE sending forth of the raven and of the dove, have furnished ready materials for numerous allegories with which divines in different ages have sometimes edified, and more frequently amused their hearers. We cannot afford time to mention many of them, but one of the host may serve as a specimen. Certain expositors have fancied that the mission of the raven prefigured the sending forth of the law, which was black and terrible, and which came not back to man bearing any token of comfort, or sign of hope; and that afterwards the Lord sent forth the gospel, foreshadowed by the dove, which by-and-by came back to sinful man, bearing the olive branch of peace. Thus, they illustrated the great truth of God that there is no peace in the terms of the law, for that raven can only croak hoarsely and fiercely, but there is peace in the ground of the gospel, for the dove bears the olive branch in her mouth. Such farfetched allegories as these, at the time when they were contrived and carried out, may have had their value, and have

been instructive to an undiscerning age; it is not, however, to be regretted that the Church of today has far less taste for such childish things. We are quite as willing as any men to see allegories where they are really clear, for we remember the words of Paul concerning Hagar and Sarah, “which things are an allegory,” but we are not ready to follow the quaint and strange inventions of spiritualists whether ancient or modern. The clue must be evident, or we had rather not enter the labyrinth.

There is one adaptation of the incident before us which seems so naturally to suggest itself, that I cannot help using it this morning. The dove may well picture the believer's soul. That soul sometimes flies abroad to and fro, and takes a survey of all things—but it finds no rest for the soles of its foot anywhere except in Christ Jesus; and, therefore, however long in flight, it is sure eventually to return to its own proper resting place. The child of God can never be content out of his God—he who has once had Christ in him, the hope of glory, can never be satisfied to rest or glory except in the Lord Jesus.

Let us, this morning, carry out that one thought, and look at it in the various lights which this picture of the dove may throw upon it.

**I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE DOVE SETTING OUT UPON HER VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.** She has been perfectly safe in the ark. Other fowls have perished—cattle and creeping things have all been destroyed by the flood—but this dove, with other favored ones, has been happily secured. She has wanted for nothing—for the God who put her into the ark has taken care of her there, and that righteous man who was made the means of her rescue has constantly provided her with her daily food. She has nestled in the ark and been happy and comfortable there, and yet she is about to stretch her wings and fly away from the boat of safety. Why does she act thus? Well



may we ask this question of ourselves— we have been saved in Christ Jesus, many of us—saved when the floods of sin covered the rest of our kinsfolk; saved when our doubts and fears threatened eternal ruin to us. We have been provided for in Christ Jesus, and housed in His salvation. He has been no wilderness to us; we have found enduring rest, and seasonable provision in Him. How is it, then, that we can stretch our wings to fly, or even open our eyes to look abroad? My soul, is there not enough in Christ? Why will you seek elsewhere? Why leave the fountain for the broken cisterns? Will a man leave the fertile fields for a barren rock, or forsake the running waters for pestilential pools? Remember the mischief that Dinah gained unto herself when she left her father's house to go to the tents of Shechem. Think how the prodigal fared when he left his father's house. Why do you not tarry at home with your Husband and liege Lord? Why do you go abroad where all is empty and void and waste? Yet we must all confess that these hearts of ours are apt to bear us away from Christ, and these minds of ours are prone to forget Him, and to look abroad after some other love.

But why did the dove fly away? I answer first—a very simple answer to give, you will say—*because she had wings*. A creature with wings feels within itself a natural instinct to fly and, having been in the ark so long where she had little space for flight, I daresay her liberty at first was very sweet to her. What are these pinions for—why are they covered with silver and the feathers with yellow gold, if I may not clip through yonder cloud and cleave these earth-mists and see what there is to be seen? And, therefore, because she has wings she flies; and so it is with us. Our soul has many thoughts and many powers which make the spirit restless. If we were without imagination, we might be content with the few plain truths which we have so well known and proved, but having an

imagination, we are often dazzled by it, and we need to know whether certain things which look like solid truths really are. If we had no reason, but could abide entirely in a state of pure and simple faith, we might not be exposed to much of the restlessness which now afflicts us, but reason will draw conclusions, ask questions, suggest problems, raise inquiries, and vex us with difficulties. Therefore, because our souls are moved by so vast a variety of thoughts, and possess so many powers which are all restless and active, it is readily to be understood that while we are here in our imperfect state, our spirits should be tempted to excursions of research and voyages of discovery, as though we sought after some other object of love besides the One who still is dearer to us than all the world besides.

Possibly there was another reason. *This dove was once lodged in a dovecote.* When children, we saw men throwing up carrier pigeons into the air, laden with messages, and we foolishly wondered how the dove knew the way to go with the letter, dreaming as we did, that it flew with it wherever the person chose to direct the envelope. We soon learned the secret. The dove bears the letter to her own dovecote— she will go nowhere else with it—and it is not in the wit of man to make the dove fly in any other direction than towards its own home. The dove is thrown up into the air; she mounts aloft, whirls round and round and round, looking with eager eyes. At last, she sees the place where she has been known to rest, and where her little ones have been reared, and she darts straight to the spot. Before the ark was built, no doubt, this bird frequented much a chosen spot where it had built its nest and reared its young ones, and its heart went towards it. Though it had been in the ark so long, it had not forgotten the past; and therefore no sooner has it liberty than it seeks to fly in the direction of its own dovecote, although that cote had been swept away

forever. Ah, and you and I, before we knew the Savior, we had a rest; before we had experienced the sweetness of His love, we found joy in sin. We built our nest, and we thought in our heart that we should never be moved. We were satisfied once after a fashion with the vanities of this present world; we had our loves, our joys, our pleasures, our delights; and that carnal old nature within us is not dead, and when it gets its liberty, it is sure to look out for its old haunts.

Have you not, even when singing God's praise, remembered a snatch of an old, perhaps lascivious song? Have not you frequently, when in the service of God, had brought to your recollection a dark scene of sin in which you had a share? And though you have loathed it with the *new* nature, yet has not the *old* nature tended towards it? And has not that base heart within—which will not die until flesh becomes worms' meat—whispered to you to go back to the fleshpots of Egypt, and once more to partake of the garlic, and leeks, and onions which were so sweet in the house of bondage? Yes, the dovecote still has its attraction. The best of men have still within them the seeds of those sins which make the worst of men so vile. The old serpent still creeps along the heart which has become a garden of the Lord. Our gold is mixed with dross. Our sky bears many a cloud, and the clearest river of humanity still has mud at the bottom. I marvel not that the dove flew away from the ark when she remembered her dovecote, and I do not wonder that, at seasons, the old remembrances get the upper hand with our spirit, and we forget the Lord we love, and have a hankering after sin.

Yet it would not be fair to forget that *this dove was sent out by Noah*—so that whatever may have been the particular motives which ruled the creature, there was a higher motive which ruled Noah who sent her out. Even so, there are times when the Lord permits His people to endure temptation. What does this

passage mean concerning the Savior—"After He was baptized, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"? What? Led of the Spirit? Where will the Spirit lead Him? Will not the Spirit lead Him to His Father's temple that He may join in its hallowed exercises? Will He not lead Him to the mountain where He may proclaim glad tidings to the people? No. The Spirit led Him into the wilderness "to be tempted of the devil." We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And very stupid people have tried to alter the petition into, "Leave us not in temptation." The Savior never said that. It would be a very proper prayer, but it is not what He said. His words are, "Lead us not into temptation." It appears, then, that sometimes God may allow His people to be led into temptation, or otherwise we need not say, "Lead us not into temptation." Such temptation produces excellent results, being overruled by divine grace for the lasting benefit of the Lord's people. The dove would love the ark far better than before, after taking its dreary flight above the watery waste. She would nestle more peacefully than ever in Noah's hands after having seen and known how impossible it was to find rest for the soles of her foot anywhere else. Thus the Lord permits His people to gad abroad in their thoughts, and to go flying about in their minds that their later repose may be sweeter and more enduring. He takes away from them the light of His countenance and familiar fellowship with Himself that the darkness may make them prize the sun. They fly from vanity to vanity, learning the emptiness of all, and then they cling to their own real bliss—their God and Father in Christ Jesus! And throughout life, they have to bless God for that dark and bitter experience which yielded so good and comfortable a fruit that it compelled them to know that there was none upon earth for them but Christ, and none even in heaven to fill their souls but their Lord Jesus. So when I see the Christian taking wing in his thought away from the

ark, I will be grieved to see him in the temptation, but I will pray the Lord to overrule it that he may come back again and say, “Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Beloved, it is a bitter but a precious lesson to learn, that all is nothing out of Christ, and that Jesus alone can give us rest. May you all learn it thoroughly and learn it soon.

**II. Now, MARK THE DOVE AS SHE FINDS NO REST.**

She has plumed her wings, and she hurries in her search after a home. The mountain tops, I think, according to the preceding verses were just visible, but this was all. She flies over them and between them, as they rise like islands in the midst of that vast shoreless sea. At last, she tires—even the dove cannot fly forever. She needs to rest. Where shall she end her flight? The raven yonder is comfortable enough gorging himself upon the carcass of a huge beast which was floating by. The dove, however, cannot rest there—her nature loathes putridity, and she flies away from the reeking mass. Yonder is a tree—one of the mighty monarchs of the forest has been broken off in the great tempest which drowned the world, and is now floating high with branches lifted up like the masts of a vessel. She tries to light upon it, but it is covered with thick mire and filth. The wet and slime suit her not, and she takes to her wings again. Further off another object attracts her, and she speeds to it as well as her weary wings can carry her. But there is nothing there for her to rest upon. She turns east, north, south, but her wings grow weary for she can find no place where to rest the sole of her foot. As we observe her flapping her wings so languidly, I think we have a picture of a Christian in pursuit of an earthly object on which he would desire to set his heart. Forgetting that, here, we have no continuing city, the pilgrims of God at times wander in the wilderness hoping to find a settled

habitation there; but their desolate hearts are soon faint within them, for there is no rest for their feet on earth.

The Savior very beautifully said, “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” What kind of rest did the Savior mean to give? I take it that He meant rest to all the powers of manhood. *The intellect* seeks after rest, and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of fine education, men of great mental powers are apt, even when converted, to look upon the simplicities of the cross of Christ—I may not say with disesteem—but still with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the net in which the Grecians were taken—they have a hankering to mix *philosophy* with revelation. The temptation is with a man of refined thought and high education to go away from the simple truth of Christ crucified, and to invent a more complicated, as the term is, a more *intellectual* doctrine. This it was which led the early Christian Church into Gnosticism, and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology, and the other fine things which, in days gone by, were so fashionable in Germany, and are now so ensnaring to certain classes of divines. Brethren, I care not who you are, nor what your education may be—if you are the Lord’s people, you will find no rest in the teachings of philosophy—or philosophizing divinity. You may receive this dogma of one great thinker, or that of another profound reasoner—but what the chaff is to the wheat—that will these be to the sure Word of God! All that reason, when best guided, can find out, is but the ABCs of the truth of God, and even that lacks sureness and certainty—while in Christ Jesus, there is treasured up all the fullness of wisdom and knowledge! All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and broad church thinkers would approve of must fail; true heirs of heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality which makes the

plowboy's eyes flash with joy, and gladdens the pious man's heart—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Christ satisfies the most elevated intellect when He is believingly received, but apart from Him, the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest.

*The heart*, too, needs satisfying. Every one of us needs an object to love. I suppose there can hardly live on earth a man so monstrously selfish that he can be perfectly wrapped up in himself, and care for no one. Some of the grossest villains, who have ever defiled the name of manhood, have had one point in which they could be touched; their hearts have gone out after one dear object—it may be a little child, long dead—and yet the recollection of that little one sleeping beneath the turf has been a link to goodness. Many a hardened man has remembered his mother, and her name has touched his heart. We must love something, or someone. Man was not made to live alone, and therefore no man lives unto himself. Our heart must flow like a river, or it corrupts like a stagnant pool. Some have great hearts, and they require a great object on which to spend their love. They love fondly and firmly—too fondly and too firmly for earthly love. These are they who suffer from broken hearts. They have so much love that, when they set it upon an unworthy object, they reap a proportionate degree of misery and disappointment. Now, let me say solemnly, that no heart of a child of God will ever be satisfied with any object or person short of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is room for wife and children, there is room for friend and acquaintance, and all the more room in one's heart because Christ is there, but neither wife, nor children, nor friends, nor kinsfolk can ever fill the believer's heart. He must have Christ Jesus—there is no rest for him elsewhere. Do I address any believer who has been making an idol? Have you set up any god in your heart? Have

you loved any creature so as to forget your Savior? Be it child, or husband, or friend, take heed of the sin of idolatry!

Ah, you cannot, you *shall* not find rest for the soles of your feet in the creature, however fair that creature may seem. God will break your idol before your eyes, or if He allows that idol to stand, it shall remain to plague and curse you, for thus says the Lord, “Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” “Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted?” Give your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and He will never disappoint you. Lean on Him with all your weight of affection, for He will never fail you. Come here, all you fond and doting, you lovers, and love with all the lavish wealth and fervent heat of your spirits; kindle your hearts until, like Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, they glow seven times hotter—here is a fuel with which you can maintain the flame forever! You whose love is like the sea, too deep to fathom, come to the Savior and give Him all, and He shall not waste a drop, for He deserves all you can give, and He will give you back a love which, compared with yours, shall be as the ocean when compared with the dewdrop that twinkles on the bough. So there *is* rest for the heart in Christ Jesus, but nowhere else.

Man has also *judgment*, and judgment, when exercised upon things right or wrong, is called *conscience*— and the conscience is a very difficult thing to quiet when once disturbed. Conscience is like a magnetic needle, which, if once turned aside from its pole, will never cease trembling; you can never make it still until it is permitted to return to its proper place—

“In vain the trembling conscience seeks,  
Some solid ground to rest upon.  
With strong desire the spirit faints,  
Till we apply to Christ alone.”



We shall never be able to find lasting peace for conscience till we cast ourselves upon Christ Jesus! The child of God may sometimes so forget himself as to endeavor to base his hopes upon his experiences, his feelings, his joys, or his repentances. He may try to assure himself that all is well between God and his own soul because of his graces or his good works. Now, Christian, you know, or you ought to know by past experience, that you will never enjoy lasting peace here. You must come to Christ as you did at first, with nothing of your own, and take Him to be your all in all. And if you do not do this, your foot shall know no rest, for you shall fly wearily on till you shall drop with despair. Christ Jesus, in the preciousness of His besprinkled blood; Christ Jesus, in the glory of His snow-white righteousness; Christ Jesus, in the prevalence of His intercession; Christ Jesus, in the power of His arm, and the love of His heart, must be the sole and solitary dependence of every heir of heaven, and if you try to mix anything else with Christ, then your conscience shall accuse and Satan shall find an echo in your heart when he rails at you—and what will you do then? Let me say, dear friends, that for the entire man—we cannot stop this morning to take all the different powers with which man is endowed—but taking the whole together, there is nothing that can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord Himself. Many saints have tried to anchor in other shelters, but all have failed.

I believe Solomon was a saint, I know he was a sinner; I believe he was the biggest fool that ever lived, but I believe that he was also the wisest of men; he was, in fact, a mass of contradictions. Now, Solomon was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words—“I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What does it do? I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting

my heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I built houses; I planted vineyards—I made gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water the wood that brings forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house. Also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I got men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had worked, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.” What? The whole of it vanity? Is there nothing in all that wealth, Solomon? What? Nothing in that wide dominion of yours reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra’s glorious seat? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? Do you see nothing from Dan to Beersheba when you have made brass to be like pebbles, and gold and silver to be but as common dust of the land? In those sweet sounds that lull you to your rest, in all the music and dancing that delight you, is there nothing?

“Nothing,” he says, “but weariness of spirit.” This is his verdict when he has tried it all. To get hold of Christ, to have His love, and to taste of union with Him—this, dear brethren, this is everything! You need not try any other form of life in

order to see whether it is better than the Christian's. Let me assure you, if you roam the world round, and search from Britain to Japan, you will see no sights like a sight of the Savior's face! And if you could have all the comforts of life, yet if you lost your Savior, you would be wretched; but if you get Him, then should you rot in a dungeon, you would find it a paradise! Should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you would yet be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord!

**III. Let us spend a moment in considering WHY THE DOVE COULD FIND NO REST FOR THE SOLE OF HER FOOT.**

Was there a lack of *will* in the dove? Was she one of those discontented birds that will not rest anywhere? Nothing of the kind; she seems to have searched after rest, for otherwise it need not be recorded that she found none. There are certain people in this world who never will rest, and they certainly do not deserve it. They always grumble. No matter what you do, or what you do not do, they grumble. They grumble at the sun, and call him, as Thompson once did, "a rosy drunkard." They murmur at the moon, her light is too pale, and sickly, and variable; they murmur at death—it is a dreadful thing to lose one's friends; they murmur at life—everybody seems to die and be happy, they say, except themselves—they are condemned to live on. You can never please them; all things are either too hot or too cold, too young or too old, too rough or too smooth, too high or too low. They have made up their minds that there is nothing on earth that will ever satisfy them; they have set up an ultra standard of what they want, and the world does not yield it. No grass is green enough for them; no milk that is ever given by cows is fit for them to drink; no wine that was ever pressed from grapes is rich enough for their taste. Upon all created things, they use the only organ which seems to be of use to them, that is, their nose—and that they turn up! Such people as these will tell you that there is nothing on earth—

nothing on earth. They have indigestion, their liver is out of order—and consequently, there is nothing on earth—everything here below is mean and despicable.

Now, when people talk like that you just measure their talk by the men, and make small account of their utterances. These men are not talking from their judgment—they are merely talking under the influence of an absurd, half-mad feeling; but such is not the case with the Christian. I know a considerable number of Christians who are of a cheerful disposition, and who would even as worldlings have been satisfied with very little. They are a kind of men, (I trust you have some of them for your friends), who are not often put out; they, on the other hand, always look at the bright side of everything, and if there should be a something which is a little amiss, they take it as a variety, and only say, “Well, this is a change,” and so they make pleasure where others would find pain. And yet these very people, when they are converted, will tell you that they are not satisfied out of Christ! Now their verdict is worth considering. The dove had a will to find rest for the sole of her foot, but she could not.

It is not from want of will that I am compelled to say I cannot find anything beneath these stars, nor within the compass of the skies, that can satisfy my soul's desires. I must get my God and have Him to fill my large expectations, or I shall not be content. I mention these things because people are apt to suppose that Christians are all a set of melancholy hotheads, who put up with religion because there is nothing else that helps to make them to be so happily miserable, and therefore they take to it as congenial with their melancholy disposition. But it is not so; we are a cheerful, genial race, and yet for all that, we are not resting the sole of our foot anywhere in earthly things.

Again, the reason why the dove could find no rest was not because she had no *eyes* to see. I know not how far a dove's eyes can discern, but it must be a very vast distance—perfectly incredible I would think. We see the dove sometimes mount aloft—we can see nothing, and yet she perceives her dovecote, and darts towards it. Now, the Christian does not say there is no joy on earth for him except in his Lord, because he has no power to see things pleasing and delightful. If there is melody in music, the Christian knows it, likes it, rejoices in it. If there is sweetness, his palate is as good as another man's. If there is anything to be found in wealth, or what the world calls pleasure, he can see it all—he is not blind. I know many Christians who are as quick in apprehension, as refined in taste, and as ready to appreciate anything that is pleasurable as other men, and yet these are men who are not fanatics, are not shut up to a narrow range of things, but their vision can take in the whole circle of sublunary delights. These are men who have not only seen, but even tasted, yet bear their witness that, like the dove, they can find no rest for the sole of their foot.

Moreover, the reason why the dove found no rest was not because she had no *wings* to reach it. Her wings were strong and swift. She could fly as well as the raven—perhaps she could in the long run outstrip him. So the Christian has power to enter into the enjoyments of the world if he likes. It is not because his youth has departed, and he has become old and shriveled, and therefore the delights of the flesh have ceased to be temptations to him. No. Of course there are some in that condition, who when converted can almost be taunted by sinners with the remark that they have tried the world's pleasures, and when they could not enjoy them they then turned away from them; but some of us are young and strong and full of blood, and our bones are full of marrow, and if we willed it we could be ringleaders in all sorts of pleasure, and

plunge head first into the stream of sensual delight. We lack not courage, and we lack not force, and yet for all this—we say it solemnly, and the God Who searches all hearts knows we only say what we feel forced to say—that we can find no rest for the sole of our foot in earthly pleasures. We have tried, we have wished to rest, we have even wanted to be satisfied with the world, but the void within can never be filled out of the mines of earth. We cannot—God has made it all empty to us.

Now, what was the reason then? It was not lack of will, it was not lack of sight, nor was it lack of wings—what was it? The reason lay in this—*she was a dove!* If she had been a raven, she would have found plenty of rest for the sole of her foot. It was her nature that made her restless, and the reason why the Christian cannot find satisfaction in worldly things is because there is a new nature within him that cannot rest. “Up! Up! Up!” cries the new heart, “What have you to do here?” “Come, strike your tents,” cries the new creature, “you have no continuing city here—how is it that you try to make one in this barren wilderness? Away with you! What are you doing?” If I could transform myself to an unregenerate man, the world might content me, but if I am regenerate, it matters not into what society I may be thrown, I never can, I never shall, I must not, I dare not hope for contentment—for to the regenerate, Christ alone is satisfaction—they cannot find it anywhere else.

You see, then, that this is a great test—this will try you, dear friends, and divide you. If any of you are saying, “Oh, I am satisfied enough, I do not want this Christ the man talks about—give me this, and give me that, and I shall be quite content.” I say, “Very likely; so was the raven content with carrion. But, and if you are a child of God, you may seek contentment elsewhere, but you shall be compelled, perhaps by sore and bitter trials, to turn away from all earthly things, and fly back again to your ark.”

#### IV. Being disappointed, **WHAT DID THE DOVE THEN DO?**

When she found there was no contentment elsewhere, what then? She flew back to the ark. Josephus tells us that the dove came back to Noah with her wings and feet all wet and muddy. I think it is very likely, but I do not think it any the more likely because Josephus says so. Some of you have grown wet and muddy. You have been trying to find rest in the world, Christian, and you have got mired with it. Trying to rest those feet where they could not rest, you have collected filth. What then? Shall I advise you to bathe in the flood? Shall I advise you to cleanse those wings till they are bright as they once were? No, I do not; I cannot give you any such advice; I can only say to you, “Do what the dove did.” She mounted again; she caught sight of the ark, and knew the place of safety. I want you once again to get a sight of Christ. Peter had gone far away, as the dove had done—he had denied his Master with oaths and curses—and what brought him back? Why, it was the Lord getting a sight of Peter, and Peter getting a sight of the Lord. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and “He went out and wept bitterly.” Was it not all done as soon as the Lord’s eyes and Peter’s eyes came into contact? If you are enabled, by the Holy Spirit, to remember that there was a Savior who loved you so that heaven could not hold Him, and that He had to come to earth, and enter into your degradation, and bear your sin, and suffer for your sake, you will be getting right at once, however far off you are. If you look to Jesus, there is life for you in a look at the crucified One.

Then the dove, after looking, was not content with that—she began to speed with all her might back to the ark. So, when you have a faint view of your Savior, and you are once more consciously saved, then fly back to Him. I do not read that the dove made a tour round about, or that she thought she would try something else, but no, she took just the straightest line she

could, the nearest way between herself and her loved abode, and went right straight away to Noah. Fear may have made her wings heavy, but it did not stop them, and mire and mud may have made the journey more laborious, but it did not turn her aside! Come you mired ones! Come you fainting ones, doves as you are! Though you think yourself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin—back, back to the Savior! Every moment you wait does but increase your misery; your attempts to plume yourself, and make yourself fit for Him are all vanity. Come to Him just as you are! “Return you backsliding Israel.” He does not say, “Return you *repenting* Israel,” (there is such an invitation, doubtless), but, “You *backsliding* one, as a backslider with all your backslidings about you. Return, return, return!”

V. I want you now to turn your eyes for a moment to **THE VERY BEAUTIFUL SCENE**, so it seems to me to be, at the end of her return journey.

Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long. Here she comes! How heavily she flies! She will drop—she will never reach the ark. Here she comes and Noah is ready to receive her. She looks spotted with mire and dirt, but Noah waits for her. She has just strength to get on to the edge of the ark—she can hardly hold on there and is ready to drop, when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her in unto him. Mark that—“pulled her in unto him.” It seems to me to imply that she did not fly right in herself, but was too fearful, or too weary to get right in. She got as far as she could, and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. Did you ever feel that blessed gracious pull, when your heart has been desiring to get near to Christ? Oh, it has been such tugging, such toiling in prayer—you could only say, “I would but cannot pray. My heart is heavy as lead and my soul as hard as adamant and dead as iron. I cannot stir myself and get near to the Savior. Oh that I could! Oh that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at



rest.” All of a sudden it comes, that gracious pull; your heart begins to be on fire; and before you are aware, your soul seems to be like the chariots of Aminadab. Now it is all well with you, now can you sing sweetly to your Beloved, who has done great things for you and you are glad. All this was you perceive to the wandering dove, to the miry dove speckled with filth; just as she was, she is pulled into the ark. So you, with all that sin of yours, and those wanderings will be received. “Only return”—those are two gracious words in the Bible—“Only return”—so it is put. What? Nothing else? No, only return. She had no olive branch in her mouth this time, nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings; but it is, “Only return,” and she does return, and Noah pulls her in. Lord, pull me in! My thirsty spirit faints to reach You! My soul cries out for Your presence, but cannot reach You! I see You, Lord! Pull me in! When like Esther I faint in Your presence, and cannot tell You what I would, stretch out Your silver scepter, read my heart and grant my desire, and show Yourself to me, and open my eyes to see You and know You.

Thus much concerning the dove and its likeness to our own hearts; now I close with these three things—

First, this becomes, first of all, *a test* to you. We can divide the house into two parts by asking the question, “Are you satisfied out of Christ?” Are you satisfied and content with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ Jesus? If so, you have no reason to believe that you are a converted man. If this world satisfies you, I have no fault to find, no reason to be angry with you. Who finds fault with horses for being satisfied with hay and oats? It is their natural food. Some persons are very indignant with others, because they will go to theatres and gay assemblies. They only take what their nature craves after. The raven is now feeding on his carrion. I draw a distinction forevermore between that

which men without divine grace may do, and that which gracious men may do. The graceless man stands somewhat on the level of the beast that perishes. Well, let the swine have their husks! Let the swine, I say, have their provender. You will never make them any better by denying them their husks; you may excite their angry passions against you that is all; let them have their husks. But you, on the other hand, who are a Christian, are a different being; you are lifted into another state, you have another nature. Now, could you enjoy those things? If you really could find satisfaction in them, you are a hypocrite. If your soul really could stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover you in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite, and one of these days, down to the pit of hell your soul must go! But if, on the other hand, you feel sure and certain that if you could indulge in sin without a punishment, it would still be a punishment of itself; and if you feel you could have the whole world, and never be parted from it, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God—your God—is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage; you are a child of God! With all your sins and imperfections, take this to your comfort—if your soul has no rest in sin, you are not as the sinner is. If you are still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten you, for you have not quite forgotten Him. Here is a test, then.

And then, secondly, we must use our text as an *encouragement*. Here we have an encouragement to backsliders to return like the dove. She did not find the ark shut against her—we do not even find there was any delay. Noah pulled her in at once. To the sinner here is encouragement, too. If you come back to the ark, you shall not be excluded. If any man shall be shut out of heaven, he shuts the door himself. He who is damned signs his own death warrant. Our verse is true—

“None are excluded hence  
But those who do themselves exclude.”

If you come—sinner, drunkard, blasphemer, liar, thief—whoever you may be, it is written, “He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

“But here is one,” I think I hear someone say, “here is one of such a sort as never came before; blacker than night, more full of sin than the egg is full of meat; now, now *there* is one who will be shut out.” I say make way for him, make way for him; stand back you common sinners, make a way for him, now we will see whether Christ is true or not! Brethren, what will be the result? Why we know that in Christ there is love and truth and faithfulness, and that what He says He means, and that His promise He will perform. When that black sinner comes, the Lord looks upon him with an eye of unutterable love, and His first word is, “I have blotted out your iniquity as a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgression.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” and His next act is to plunge that sinner in the fountain filled with blood, and suddenly he comes out whiter than snow, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, for He is able to cleanse from all iniquity, and to deliver from all unrighteousness, and to make the foulest and vilest bright as the sun at noonday. This is encouragement—God help you to take it! May the Holy Spirit bring you to Christ today.

And then, lastly, we use our text, I think, as a loud cry *for gratitude*. Does Christ receive us when we have found Him, and is there none on earth like He? Is He the best of all the good, the fairest of all the lovely? Oh then, let us praise Him! Down with your idols, and up with the Lord Jesus. Now let the standard of all pomp and pride be trampled under foot, and let the cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at, be

lifted up. Oh for a high throne for the Savior! Let Him be lifted up forever, and let my soul sit at His feet, and kiss His feet, and wash them with my tears. Oh how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of Him? How is it I can go abroad for anything else when He is so full, so rich, so satisfying? Christian, make a covenant with your heart, and ask the Lord to ratify it—that you will never depart from Him. Bid Him set you as a signet upon His finger and as a bracelet upon His arm. Ask Him to bind you about Him as the bride decks herself with ornaments, and as the bridegroom puts on his jewelry. I would live in Christ's heart—in the clefts of that Rock my soul would abide! The sparrow has made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God, and so, too, would I make my nest, my home in You, and never from You may the soul of Your turtle dove go forth again, but may I nestle close to Jesus who has pulled me back into the ark after my backsliding. May the Holy Spirit so preserve us for His name's sake. Amen.

## **638 WHO ARE THE ELECT? – I SAM. 16:12**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 9th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he.” — I  
Samuel 16:12**

SAMUEL WAS sent to Bethlehem to discover the object of God's election. This would have been a very difficult task if the God who sent him had not accompanied him, and spoken with the sure voice of inspiration within him as soon as the chosen object stood before him. Brethren, it is neither your task nor mine to guess who God's elect, apart from marks and evidences are. What was done in the councils of eternity before the world was made is hidden in the mind of God, and we must not curiously intrude where the door is closed by the hand of wisdom. Yet in the preaching of the word there is a discovery made of God's secret election. We preach the gospel to every creature under heaven; we deliver God's threats and promises to every sinner, and we cry, “Look unto Jesus and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” That gospel is, of itself, through God the Holy Spirit, the discernor of the chosen ones of God, when they feel its quickening power and are raised from among the spiritually dead. The gospel is a fan which, while it drives away the chaff, leaves the wheat upon the floor. The gospel is like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's soap, removing all that is extraneous and worthless, but revealing the precious and the

pure. We ministers have no other way by which to discern the saints of God, and to separate the precious from the vile, but by faithfully preaching the truth of God as it is in Jesus, and observing its effects. As for ourselves, we may discover our own calling and election, and make them sure. Paul said of the Thessalonians, that he knew their election of God; and we may discover the election of other men to a very high degree of probability by their conduct and conversation, and be certified of our own election, even to infallibility, by the witness of the Spirit within that we are born of God. If our heart is renewed by the Spirit, if we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, if we are reconciled unto God and redeemed from dead works, we may know that our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world.

This morning I am about to speak upon the way in which we may discover the chosen, making the case of David in some degree our guiding star.

I. I would have you mark at the outset, **THE SURPRISE** of all, when they found that David, the least in his father's house, was the object of the Lord's choice as king over Israel.

Observe that *his brothers had no idea that David would be selected*. Such a thought had never entered their minds. If the question had been asked of them, "Who among you will ever attain to the kingdom?" they would have selected any of the other seven, but they would certainly have passed by their brother, David. He seems to have been thoroughly despised by his brothers. Eliab addresses him in a tone of scorn when he comes to the valley of Elah—"Because of your pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you are come to see the battle." This mode of speech was, no doubt, such as he usually employed towards the young man. I suppose that David had been one by himself. The sports of the seven were often such that he could not engage in them. He was no companion for them. If they at any time

perpetrated any unjust or unrighteous deed—if, as probably a band of seven young men in the hey-day of youth were likely to do—they were bold in courses of sinful mirth—David would follow the example of Joseph, and act as a reprover in their midst, and consequently he fell under their contempt. He was with his flock on the mountain side when they were making merry with their drinking; his book and his harp were his solace, contemplation was his great delight, and his God his best company, while his brothers found no pleasure in divine things. He, like our Lord, could say, “For Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger unto my brethren and an alien unto my mother’s children” (Psa 69:7, 8). Like Joseph, he was “the dreamer” of the family in the esteem of the rest. They thought him moon-struck when he considered the heavens, and called him mad when he meditated both day and night on God’s law.

Now, beloved friends to whom I address myself, you may be one of those whom God has looked upon with an eye of love from before the foundation of the world, and yet, in the family to which you belong you may be overlooked and forgotten. Your own brethren have formed a very low opinion of your abilities, and they have a perfect contempt for the singularity of your character. You are as a speckled bird among your own kinsfolk; you cannot enjoy what they enjoy; your loves and your longings run in a different channel from theirs. Allow not their contempt to break your heart. Remember David once stood in your position, and there was yet another in the earlier days upon the crown of whose head the blessing of the eternal hills descended though he was separated from his brethren; and so may heaven’s enriching smile yet rest on you, for the Lord sees not as man sees. The rejected of men are often the beloved of the Lord.

It is more painful to notice that *David's father should have had no idea of David's excellence*. A father has naturally more love to his child than a brother to his brother, and frequently the youngest child is the darling; but David does not seem to have been the tender one of his father. Jesse calls him the least, and if I understand the word which he uses in the original, there is something more implied than his being the youngest; he was the least in the estimation of the ill-judging parent. It is strange that he should have been left out when the rest were summoned to the feast, and I cannot acquit Jesse of fault in having omitted to call his son, when that feast was a special religious service. At a sacrifice all should be present; when the prophet comes, none should be away, and yet it was not thought worthwhile to call David, although one would think a servant might have kept the sheep, and so the whole family might have met on so hallowed an occasion. Yet no son was left in the field but David, all the others were assembled. It sometimes happens, (but O, how wrongly!) that one in the family is overlooked, even by his parent, in his hopes and prayers. The father seems to think, "God may be pleased to convert William; He may call Mary; I trust in His providence we shall see John grow up to be a credit to us; but as for Richard or Sarah, I do not know what will ever become of them." How often will parents have to confess that they have misjudged, and that the one upon whom they have set the black mark has been, after all, the joy and comfort of their lives, and has given them more satisfaction than all the rest put together! Are you such a one, young man? Are you painfully conscious that you have a narrow share in your parents' hearts? Be not downcast, distressed, or broken-hearted about this. You fare as David did before you, and if he, the favored servant of God, the man after God's own heart, could put up with his position, be not you too proud to abide in it, for even if your father and your mother



forsake you, if the Lord takes you up, He will be better to you than the best of parents!

It is clear, also, that *Samuel, God's servant, had at first no idea of David's election*. The brothers advanced one by one, and Samuel, using his human judgment, was ready to select any other rather than David. The minister of God, if he is truly called and sent, has a yearning in his soul to bring out God's chosen from their hidden state. His eyes are quick to discern the first tokens of divine grace in a renewed soul. But sometimes the Christian minister is deceived. He consults with flesh and blood, and selects Eliab, the one who is a *fine person*, whose noble countenance bespeaks something above the ordinary level, whose whole frame is so admirably fashioned, that he is good to look upon. How true is it that the Lord takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The gifts of personal appearance often become snares instead of blessings; "Beauty is deceitful, and favor is vain." The Lord had not chosen Eliab. Then *rank* will come before the minister, and if he sees a person of high estate cheerfully listening to the gospel, he is very ready to think, "Surely the Lord has chosen him"; but how often these are but birds of passage in our congregation who never tarry long enough to build a nest in the sanctuary. Mere curiosity brings them, and a new curiosity carries them elsewhere. Surely the Lord has not often chosen these Abinadabs. Again, others are so *well educated* that when the word is preached, they appreciate the style in which it is delivered, and the remarks which they make concerning it are so sensible and so judicious, that the preacher is apt to say, "Surely the Lord has chosen these!" And yet, how often the educated are too proud to believe the simplicities of Christ and the intellectual turn on their heels because the gospel is scarcely refined enough for their taste. At other times, we feel sure that we have now pitched upon the right man, for we are charmed

with our hearer's *natural amiability of disposition*, and are cheered by his tenderness and susceptibility of mind to religious impressions; and yet we are disappointed. Many lovely blossoms never become fruit, and hopeful saplings prove not to be plants of the Lord's right-hand planting, and therefore are plucked up.

At times, too, we hear such *admirable conversation* about religion, that we conclude, "Now we have found the chosen of the Lord." We have sat in company, and heard young men use devout expressions which implied no ordinary depth of Scriptural knowledge; we have heard those persons pray, and have admired their great gift in prayer; they have addressed religious assemblies, and spoken with a high degree of fluency, and our heart said, "Surely the Lord has chosen these!" And yet, my brothers in the ministry will tell you that often out of the many hopefuls who have passed before them, they have found many to be heart-breakers, and few who gave them any real satisfaction as to their conversion to God. Meanwhile, the very ones whom we overlooked, the least ones in the assembly, have been the Davids upon whom God's blessing has fallen. Oh, some of you have listened to our word these 10 years and more, and you have been impressed again and again—and yet you are unconverted! We often thought you must be the chosen of God when we marked your tears and your apparent feeling, but up till now you are without any evidence of election.

On the other hand, there has dropped into this place a drunkard, and there has strayed into these aisles a harlot, and the mighty grace of God has converted them, and they are rejoicing now in the full forgiveness of their sins while you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." How true is that word, "The publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you." How matchless is the sovereignty of God! "His ways are past finding out." The very

poorest, the most illiterate, the mean and most obscure, the fools, the babes, the things despised—yes—“the things that are not” does He choose, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. It strikes me that there was one person more astonished when David was anointed than even his brothers, or his father, or the prophet—and that was *David!* He was a wonder unto many, but chiefly to himself. He had communed with God alone beneath the spreading trees; he had sung the praises of Jehovah in the wilderness where he had led his flocks; and by the waterside he had tuned his harp, and made the rocks echo with the sweet music of his grateful soul; but he never dreamed of being a king! If a prophet had said to him, “The Lord will take you from following the sheep to be ruler over His people Israel, and He will be with you wherever you go, and cut off all your enemies out of your sight, and make you a name like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth,” he would have cried, “What am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me here? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?”

So, dear friend, you may be truly a child of God, but you may, as yet, have no clear view of the high and noble calling to which God has ordained you. Your trembling faith has laid its hand upon the head of Jesus, and you trust you are forgiven—but as yet, you do not know the grandeur and dignity to which faith exalts every heir of heaven. Now, let me whisper in your ear words concerning your present greatness and the glory which is yet to be revealed in you. “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” You are justified by faith, and you have peace with God, and do you not know that, “Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies”? You shall be surely glorified! Do you know the reason for this? It is because you are “elect

according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” Yes, poor trembler, the thoughts of God were exercised concerning you before the stars began to dart their rays through the thick darkness; Jehovah-Jesus wrote your name upon His heart, and engraved it on the palms of His hands before the skies were stretched abroad. Be of good courage, there is a kingdom for you! The sure mercies of David have ordained you to overcome and to sit down upon Jesus’ throne, even as He has overcome and is set down with His Father upon His throne. Be glad, therefore, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I think I see you all surprised, and you say, “How can it be? I! Chosen of God! My many sins, my great infirmities, my doubts, my barrenness in God’s service—the coldness of my heart—all these make me go mourning. Can it be that yet He has ordained me to a kingdom?” It is even so. Let your faith grasp the truth, and go your way rejoicing.

Remember, dear friend, that it matters not what your occupation may be, you may yet have the privilege of the kingdom of God. David was but a shepherd and yet he was raised to the throne, and so shall each believer be. You may be obscure and unknown, in your father’s house the very least, and yet you may share a filial part in the divine heart. You may be among those who never would be mentioned except as mere units of the general census, without parts, without position; you may almost think yourself to have less than the one talent; you may conceive yourself to be a worm and no man—and like David you may say, “I was as a beast before You.” And yet think of this—that the marvelous election of God can stoop from the highest throne of glory, to lift the beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes!

**II.** We shall now turn our thoughts to **THE TOKEN** of election, the secret mark which the Lord sets in due time upon the chosen.

In due time, every chosen person receives the seal of divine grace. That stamp is a new heart and a right spirit. Let all men understand that a new heart is the private seal of the divine One, the broad arrow of the King of kings. Men look upon the outward appearance as the mark of favor, but God looks at the *heart* as the token of His choice. We are not to suppose David was chosen to salvation because of the natural goodness of his heart, for he tells us himself that he was, “Born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” Although we are willing to grant that when God had renewed his heart as the result of His sovereign grace, a goodness of heart constituted a qualification for the kingdom, just as grace is a fitness for glory, but the righteousness of heart was itself the *gift* of sovereign grace, and was the effect and not the cause of the primary and eternal election which fixed on David. We do not intend to discuss the reason of God’s election—let us not be misunderstood—of that we know nothing; we believe that God chooses wisely, but He chooses from reasons not known to men, probably reasons which could not be understood by us. All we know is, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” We are now speaking of the way by which God seals His elect and distinguishes His chosen ones, after His grace has operated upon them. They are distinguished by having a heart that differs from other men. May we be able thus to discover whether we are among them or not!

What kind of heart had David? We may find it out by his Psalms. We cannot tell when some of the Psalms were written, but if any of them were written in his youth, the 23rd was certainly one. That beautiful pastoral poem opens a window into the heart of David, let us look through it, and we shall soon

perceive that he possessed *a believing heart*. How sweet is the sentence, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Happy David! He had summed up all his needs and cares, he knew that he needed pardon for sin, and divine grace to preserve him from evil, wisdom to guide him in the perilous paths of youth, strength to aid him in the conflicts which were before him; but instead of looking to himself or to friends, he turns away from all created good, to God, and by faith he says, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Here is a grand mark of divine election. Dear friend, do you rest in God for everything? Has your heart given up all confidence in itself? “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.” Has your heart given up all trust in your fellow man? “Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” Have you seen the emptiness of your own doings, and willings, and beings, and wishings, and have you taken the Lord as He reveals Himself in the pages of Scripture—Father, Son, and Spirit—to be your All in All? If you do so trust, you need not fear your election, for when God looks into your heart, He sees in your faith the symbol and sign of His sovereign grace. Never was there a simple faith in Himself where there had not been His hand at work, and His heart ordaining to eternal life.

We note, as we read the Psalm, that David’s heart was also *a meditative heart*. Mark the words, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” He elsewhere writes— “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” The whole book of Psalms, which is David’s life written out in poetic characters, proves, that he was much given to meditation on heavenly subjects. Alone there on the mountains, down by the rippling brooks—wherever he had to conduct the flocks—there he set up an altar to his God, and made an oratory for himself. Much sweet communion was carried on between David and his God which Eliab knew nothing of, and into

which Abinadab could not enter. Read the 119th Psalm, and you will see that he won for himself all the blessings which by inspiration he sang of in the first Psalm. He meditated upon the law of his God both day and night. Dear friend, is that your case? When your thoughts get free, do they fly away as the dove does to its dovecote—right away to God? Can you say with David that His Words are sweet to your taste? Is the very name of God dear to you? Do you delight yourself in Him? Do you meditate much upon the Person of Jesus Christ? Remember that by your thoughts you may judge your state, and if your heart does not meditate on God's statutes, you certainly miss one of the signs of divine election; for elect souls are brought out in due time to find a delight in the ways and Words of God.

Go on with the Psalm, and I think you will be struck with *the humble heart* which David had, for all the way through he does not praise himself. "*He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul.*" See, he has no crown for his own head; the crown is all for the Mighty One who is his Shepherd. His soul was in his pen when he wrote, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory." David was none of your strutting peacocks who cannot be content unless all eyes are upon them; he sang God's praises as the nightingale will sing in the dark, when no human ear is listening and no eye is admiring. He was content to bloom unseen, knowing that the sweetness of a renewed heart is never wasted on the desert air. He was satisfied with God alone as his auditor, and he coveted not the high opinion of man. Before his God how high he rose, and yet how low he bowed. How deeply did he feel his indebtedness to Him who gave him all, and how zealously did he ascribe his salvation, and glory and strength, unto Him who had been from the first to the last his helper. He would have enjoyed the verse in which Asaph alludes to his low estate, "He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following

the ewes, great with young, He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance.” O for a heart free from all pride.

We should altogether fail in describing David if we were to omit other qualifications. His was a *holy heart*. Observe in the same Psalm, “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” David delighted not in iniquity; the men of Belial he put far from him. “A liar shall not tarry in my sight,” he said. He loved the people of God; He styles them, “The excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight.” Holiness which becomes God’s house was very delightful to David’s soul. He loved the commandments of God because of their holiness. “Your Word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it” (Psa 119:140). I grant you that he did once fall into grievous sin, but that was an exception to a gracious rule. His rule was holiness. The best of men are men at the best, and therefore they may slip, but oh, how bitterly David mourned to his dying day, the evil into which he fell. “He was a man after God’s own heart, and his way was ordered according to holiness.”

Note what a *brave heart* beat in his breast. Where will you find a braver man than David? “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.” It is this David who, while the cringing host of Israel flies from combat, enters the battle with the boasting Philistine, and brings deliverance unto Israel. Hear the stripling’s valorous voice—“You come against me with sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” How bold was David in most cases! There *were* times when he, like the children of Ephraim, turned his back in the day of battle; take for instance, when he played the fool before Achish; but in other cases, his soul was set against the Lord’s enemies, and though a host encamped



against him, his heart did not fear; though war was waged against him, in this was he confident; for he wore the breastplate of dauntless courage. The Psalm right bravely puts it, “Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”

Let me remind you that he had *a very contented and grateful heart*. I do not know a better picture of David in his early days, than that which Bunyan gives us of the shepherd who was singing in the valley of humiliation—

“He who is down needs fear no fall;  
He who is low, no pride;  
He who is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.  
I am content with what I have,  
Little be it or much;  
And Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Because You save such.”

Here is David's version of the very same sentiment, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.” He had all his heart could wish. I do trust, dear friends, we can, some of us, humbly claim that we possess such a heart as this, and oh, that my tongue may be able to say without deceit, “Yes, Lord, my soul is satisfied with what You ordain, whatever *Your* will is, it shall be my will.”

You should further observe *the constancy of David's heart*. He says, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord *forever*.” He was not one of the Pliables, who set out and turn back again at the first slough into which they tumble; he was no Demas,

ready to forsake his profession to win this present evil world; but all the days of his life he abode close to the way of the Lord, and remained as a servant in God's house.

By such marks may *we* know our election. I would God that those who are so positive of their election would condescend, sometimes, to try themselves by Scriptural marks and evidences. We are told, by certain divines, that we should never doubt our safety. Beloved, we should never doubt *God*, but I am inclined to think that no man who exercises a holy watchfulness over himself, and a holy earnestness to be found accepted at the last, can be at all times without doubts as to his own interest in Christ. I am persuaded that the hymn—

“’Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,”

is the experience of every child of God, more or less, and that there are seasons when that is the best hymn which a man can sing. It is seldom that I doubt my interest in Christ Jesus, but it is very often that I ask myself, “Is this confidence well-grounded?” And if I were afraid to question myself, if I were afraid to go back to the foundation and search myself thoroughly, if I always went on blindly confident, and never examined myself whether I were in the faith—I think that would be an omen of being given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie. I have labored in your presence to preach up the privilege of strong faith; I have urged you to strive after full assurance of faith; but never let these lips say a word or a syllable against that holy carefulness which makes a broad distinction between presumption and assurance. Depend upon it, privilege preached always without precept, will breed a fullness and lethargy in God's people—what we need at certain seasons is not a promise, but a telling, burning word of self-

examination—the flavor of which we may not like, but which shall work in our souls spiritual good of a more lasting sort than sweet comforts would bring to us. Examine yourselves, dear friends, then, by this.

I do not ask you whether your hearts are perfect—they are not; I do not ask you whether your hearts never go astray, for they are prone to wander; but I do ask you—is your heart *resting* upon Jesus Christ? Is it a believing heart? Does your heart meditate upon divine things? Does it find its best solace there? Is your heart a humble heart? Are you constrained to ascribe all to sovereign grace? Is your heart a holy heart? Do you desire holiness? Do you find your pleasure in it? Is your heart bold for God? Does your heart ascribe praises to God? Is it a grateful heart? And is it a heart that is wholly fixed upon God, desiring never to go astray? If it is, then you have marks of election. Search for these, and add to all your searching this prayer, “Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my ways; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Let me beseech you to pray God to pull your comforts into pieces if they are false comforts. I have pleaded with my God on bended knee full often, to let me know the worst of my case, and if I am deluded, deceived, or deceiving, I do pray Him to tear the bandage from my eyes and take away every balm from my wounded heart, except the balm of Gilead, and never to let me rest till I am soundly grounded and bottomed on Christ Jesus, and nowhere else but there. Do make sure work in this case. If you must have, “Buts,” and, “Ifs,” and, “Perhapses,” have them about your estates and your property, but not about your souls. May the Holy Spirit help you to be often using the crucible to see whether your profession is true gold or not.

**III.** The third point is a very interesting one. It is **MANIFESTATION**, or the way in which the elect of God are made apparent to ourselves and others.

We cannot see the hearts of our fellow men, and therefore the heart can never be to us the way of distinguishing the elect of God—except so far as it is seen in acts and words. Now the first sign by which this election was made known to David himself, and to a few others who probably did not know much about it, was by *his being anointed*. Samuel took a horn of oil, and poured it on David. I do not think Jesse knew the full meaning of it. I feel sure that the seven brothers did not, for if they had, someone or other would have told Saul. Master Trapp says, seven can only keep a secret when six of them know nothing about it. I am inclined to think that though they saw him anointed with oil, they could not bring themselves to think that such a despised one as David was really anointed for the kingdom. They saw the symbol, but probably did not understand the inward grace. But David did; David knew that he was now to be a king, and though he never stretched out a hand or lifted a finger to get that throne for himself, though he often spared his enemy, Saul, when killing him might have brought him suddenly to the crown, yet he knew that he would one day reign over Israel. Beloved, there is a season when God anoints His people. They have believed, but there may elapse a little time between the believing and the conscious anointing; but suddenly, when the Lord has illuminated their hearts to know and understand divine things clearly, the Spirit of God comes with a sealing power upon them, and from that day forward they rejoice to know that they have the indwelling of the Spirit, and that they are set apart for God. I pray that some of you who have been lately converted may get your sealing from this day forward. If you shall receive it, you will be different men and women from what you were. Already saved

by grace, you will then begin to feel that force, and power, and vigor, which renders the man of faith the master of the world. If you are anointed, you will feel the royal blood within your veins. As yet you do not know your kingship, but if the Spirit of God shall descend upon you in plenteous measure, you will know your dignity, and you will act like kings, reigning over inbred sins, and seeking, as much as lies in you, to exercise the royal priesthood which the Master has conferred upon you. This inward sealing may be recognized among the saints; a few may be able to see in you the sealing, do not expect that many will, for it is only to yourself that it becomes the infallible witness that you are one of God's elect.

The manifestation, however, went on in another way. After the anointing, it appears that *David became a man distinguished for the valor of his deeds*. Saul's servant in recommending him says of him, that he was, "A mighty valiant man and a man of war." Your election will be discovered by this—you will do what others cannot do. An elect soul, when the Spirit of God is upon him, can answer that question, "What do you do more than others?" Not proudly, but still calmly he can say—"There are many things which others do not and cannot do, which are easy to me through Christ who strengthens me." You will be able now, dear friends, to break through the toils of custom; to wrestle with the lion of worldliness, to exhibit patience under suffering, to forgive your worst enemy without difficulty, to serve God in deeds of faith, you will be able, in His strength, to be content to see your good name trod in the ditch if you may exalt Christ. Through the Holy Spirit you will do and dare where others are sluggishly cowards; you will dash forward to the conflict expecting the victory because God is with you, or you will be willing to suffer, because the Lord has strengthened you to bear all things for His sake. Your election will be best known to your fellow men by your deeds of valor.

It appears, too, that David was *very prudent*. The same witness-bearer said he was, “A man prudent in matters.” Such will you be, when, as the elect of God the Spirit of wisdom rests upon you. You will not be in a hurry, you have nothing to gain; you will not be alarmed, you have nothing to lose; you have God and therefore you have all things; you cannot lose your God, and therefore you can lose nothing; and being in no hurry, you will have time to judge and weigh matters. “He who believes shall not make haste.” Life will be with you no confused scramble. You will not be blundering out of one error, into another, because you will take your matters before God in prayer. You will consult the Scriptures, and your heart will be guided of the Lord. You will, if you live near to God, know when you come to a point of difficulty which way to turn; you will hear a voice which says, “This is the way, walk in it.” You will know, when you come to a difficulty where human wisdom is utterly worthless, how to fall flat on your face and wait until the strong arm comes to deliver you. You will be taught in the things of God and bold to teach others also, and so, daily, your election will be made known to your fellow men.

Mark well that one of the ways by which your election will become clear and sure to all God’s people, will be this—if you are anointed king as David was before you, *you will come into conflict with Saul!* It cannot be possible that the chosen of God shall forever live in peace with the heirs of hell. He, who put an enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, takes care that that old enmity shall never die. The two first men of woman born were enemies of one another for this reason, and until Christ shall come, that same enmity will exist. Saul may like you for a little time if you can play well upon an instrument, and drive away his melancholy, but when Saul finds you out and discovers you to be the anointed king, he will hurl his javelin at you. The world is very satisfied with some

ministers, and with some Christians, because they very much resemble itself; but as soon as the world finds out, “This is a man separate from us, of a different nature, and of a different country,” it cannot but hate the man—it must do so. Do you expect the world’s good word? Then go your way and flatter it, and bow to it, and cringe, and be its servant, and you shall have your reward in everlasting contempt. But are you willing to take your lot outside the camp with Jesus, and to be recognized as being not of this world because He has chosen you out of the world? Then expect to receive hard measures, expect to be misconstrued and misrepresented, and to be despised, for your reward shall be when He comes, but that reward shall outweigh all that you endure here below!

I think David was never more clearly manifested to be God’s elect, than at the last *when he was an outlaw*. He never seems such a grand man as when he is among the tracks of the wild goats of Engedi; never so great as when he is passing through the wilderness while Saul is hunting him, or standing at midnight over the sleeping form of his enemy, and saying, “I will not touch him, for he is the Lord’s anointed.” We do not read of many faults and slips and errors then. The outlawed David is most certainly manifested to all Israel to be the chosen of God, because the chosen of man cannot stand him. The happiest and best days, I believe, with the people of God, are when they are most outlawed by men, when they are put out of the synagogue, and when he who would kill them thinks that he did God a service. The brightest days for Christian piety were the days of martyrdom and persecution. Scotland has many saints, but she never has had such rich saints as those who lived in covenanting times. England has had many rich divines who have taught the word, but the Puritanical Age was the golden age of England’s Christian literature. Depend upon it—you will find in your own life you may have many days of

heaven upon earth, but the place of persecution and rejection will be the spot where Jesus Christ manifests Himself most to you. Are you resolved not to be conformed to this world? Are you willing to bear with Christ the brunt of the battle, and like the living fish to swim against the stream? Are you ready to stand out like the other holy children in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and to say, like the apostles in the days of the high priests, “Whether it is right to serve God or men, you judge”? Have you cast off the fear of man? Have you taken up the cross to wear as your best and greatest ornament and treasure? If so, you are giving the very best evidence of having been chosen out of the world because you are not of the world.

Remember, to conclude, that *after all conflicts were over, David was crowned*. All Israel and all Judah sent to fetch David, and they made him king; amidst the blast of the horns, and the homage and songs, and joy of the people, David, the elected one, was publicly recognized. The crown was put upon his head, the imperial mantle graces his person, he signed the decrees, and his word was law from Dan to Beersheba. The day comes when the like shall be true of the mean and the most despised of God’s chosen! “Truly,” said the apostle, “it does not yet appear”—we cannot see it, only faith can discern it, but it shall appear—it comes! The appearing draws near! Our head shall yet wear the crown, for we shall reign with Christ Jesus! I think even this earth, which has despised us, shall yet know us as kings when we shall reign with Him. We shall yet put on the imperial purple; from the river, even to the ends of the earth, the saints shall possess the kingdom; and when Jesus comes to judge the people, we shall judge angels, sitting as assessors with Him, giving our verdict, and adding our, “Amen’s,” to all His sentences. No, even in heaven itself, angels shall be our servitors; they shall be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and we shall sit upon thrones. Oh, Christian, you



know not the pomp which shall yet surround you! You have had some glimmering thought of the Savior's glory, and the Savior's dignity, but have you not forgotten that all this is *yours*? Remember, *we* shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. "Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am." The same place for *you* as for the Savior and you shall behold His glory, and you shall be partakers of it! Why, then, should you fear? Why should you be downcast and dismayed by reason of the trials on the way? Come! Pluck up courage! An hour with your God will make up for it all. One glimpse of Him and what will persecution seem? You have been called ugly names. Ill words have been pelted at you—but what will they be when you shall hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world"?

There! The world's thunder is gone like a whisper amidst the more glorious roll of angelic acclamations and the hiss of enmity is all forgotten amidst the kiss of love which the Savior gives to all His faithful ones. Cheered by the reward, I pray you press forward! Greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt shall you have who can renounce all for Christ's sake! "Be you faithful unto death, and He will give you a crown of life." God grant that we may all be found numbered among the elect of divine grace, and none of us be cast away, and His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

## **639 ZEALOTS – LUKE 6:15**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 16th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Simon called the Zealot.” — Luke 6:15**

SIMON, called the Zealot, has apparently two surnames in Scripture, but they mean the same thing. He is called Simon the Canaanite in Hebrew—not because he was an inhabitant of Cana or a Canaanite, but that word, when interpreted, means precisely the same as the Greek word Zelotes. He was called Simon the Zealot. I suppose that he had this name before his conversion. It is thought by some that he was a member of that very fierce and fanatical political sect of the Jews, called the Zealots, by whose means the siege of Jerusalem was rendered so much more bloody than it would have been; but this does not seem very probable, for the sect of the Zealots had scarcely arisen in the time of the Savior, and therefore, we are inclined to think with Hackett in his exposition of the Acts, that he was so called because of his zealous attachment to his religion as a Jew, for there were some in the different classes of Jewish society who were so excessively full of zeal as to gain the name of Zealot. But it strikes me that he must have been a zealot after conversion too, for within that sacred circle which surrounded our Lord, every word was truth, and the Master would not have allowed any of His disciples to have worn a surname which was not expressive or truthful. He was Simon the Zealot while in

the darkness and blindness of his mind he knew not the Messiah; he surely could not have been less Simon the Zealot when, gifted with the Holy Spirit, he went forth to cast out devils, heal the sick, and to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. I would be glad if many among us would earn the same title by so living that men would call us zealots, or even “fanatics,” for this is so sleepy an age concerning religious things, that to be called fanatic, nowadays, is one of the highest honors a man can have conferred upon him. May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian Zealots.

We shall occupy your time, this morning, first of all, *by some like description of the unconverted Zealot*; and then, secondly, *by some few remarks upon the Christian Zealot*.

#### **I. LET US PORTRAY THE UNCONVERTED ZEALOT.**

*Zeal frequently expends itself on other things than religion.* You will find many zealots not religious in any sense of the word. We have seen lately a few political zealots. The one important matter of their lives is the defense of the Whig or the Tory interest. It appears as if they would sacrifice their business, no, in their *furor*, they think everything a trifle as long as they can but vindicate some favorite opinion. Such was Saul, the king of Israel. He was such a zealot for Israel and for Judah, that in his zeal, he slew the Gibeonites. He was politically a zealot—he thought that the Gibeonites, being in the land, ate the bread which belonged to the sons of Israel, and occupied the cities which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. And, therefore, violating all covenants and solemn oaths, and bringing upon the nation a great judgment, he slew the Gibeonites.

Many are scientific zealots; they will sacrifice health in sitting over mixtures of harmful drugs to examine chemical combinations; or they will pass through feverish countries

among savage men to discover the source of a river, or measure the height of a mountain.

We can readily find business zealots—their shop windows scarcely need shutters, for business is never over; the Sunday itself is not enclosed for worship; they steal that day for keeping their books; they make haste to be rich, and they are not innocent; they plunge into this speculation and the other; they often bring their bodies to sickness, and their minds to madness in their zeal for riches. You do not find that the world cries out against zeal in business, and in science, and in politics. No, men can admire it there, but the moment you bring it into the court of the Lord's house, then straightway, they hold up their hands with astonishment, or open their mouths with blasphemy, for men cannot endure that we should make eternal things *real* and spend our strength for them; they would have us reserve our energies for the matters in which they take so deep an interest. Brethren, we would not condemn the use of zeal in the common affairs of life, for zeal is essential to success; we only wish that Christians would copy worldly men and be half as earnest and half as ambitious to maintain and increase the kingdom of their Lord and Master, as some men are after petty trifles or selfish aggrandizements. Understand then, that a man may be a zealot, and yet there may not be a trace of religion in him, for his zeal may run in quite a different channel.

The unconverted zealot, should his zeal expend itself upon religion, is generally *exceedingly boastful*. Look at Jehu, as he bids Jehonadab, the son of Rechab ride with him in his chariot, vain-gloriously exclaiming, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." He cannot kill the worshippers of Baal without someone standing by to admire how he devotes himself entirely to Jehovah. Unconverted men, when full of zeal, are almost all Jehus; they must have some admiring eyes; the clap of approval is essential to the life and vigor of their earnestness. Not so the

true Christian, he is as zealous for his Master when he stands alone or in the midst of derision as in the time when religion is honorable. Let us take care to always avoid all boastfulness; let us serve our Master as Jehu did, and better than he, but let us never say, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord.” As you travel over the mountains and become thirsty, you look for the cooling stream, but the traveler who has often passed the hills never stoops to drink of the little streamlets which run uncovered down the mountain side—he knows that their exposure to the heat of the sun has warmed the water, and taken away its grateful freshness and coolness—he looks for the trickling stream which gushes fresh from the rock or bubbles up as a spring, or has found its way under the moss and great stones all hidden from the light, and he loves to satisfy himself there. It is thus with our gifts and graces. If we expose them to public view, they lose their acceptability with the Most High God, but if we keep ourselves as much as possible from all boasting, and seek to serve God humbly and quietly, Jehovah Himself finds delight in the gracious works of His own beloved people. May the Lord keep us then from being boastful zealots.

The unconverted zealot is generally *an ignorant zealot*. “I bear them witness,” says Paul, “that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” The Pharisees were very fanatical. They were ignorant of God’s righteousness, and they went about to establish their own. They had not learned the feebleness of the principle of the law, and therefore, they struggled on and on to attain eternal life by it; they did not know the force and strength of the great principle of divine grace working through faith, and therefore, they neglected it—and with all their struggling, they came short of the kingdom of heaven. Let us beware of an ignorant zeal. How much there is of it nowadays. Probably there is more zeal to be found among the professors of false doctrine than among the followers of

the truth. How they will garnish their churches as of old the Pharisees garnished their sepulchers! How diligently will they bedeck their altars and load them with ornaments and millinery! To what an extent of effort do they go! What self-denial will they practice! What infamy, what abuse are they not willing to endure in defending the cause of their idols, and bringing back again the old superstitions of Rome. If those who are orthodox had as much zeal as the Papist and the Puseyite, it would be well for England. Oh, brethren, shun an ignorant zeal, and at the same time, labor to blend zeal with your knowledge, lest your knowledge, lacking force, should cease to be operative in the land. Let it be forever remembered that if we are ever so zealous in a wrong faith, that zeal does not make the false true nor make us right in its prosecution. I may drink poison, devoutly believing it will do me good, but it will poison me, no matter what I believe; and so I may believe a lie ever so earnestly, but it will be a lie nevertheless, and the poison of the lie will work my soul's ruin just as surely as if I had not been so fervent in its belief. Do not believe in the idea that every man who is sincere in his religion will be right at last. Not so. If a man is sincere and travels due north, he will not reach a town in the south—and if he spurs his horse ever so much towards the east, he will not arrive at his destination, if that destination is a city in the west. Seek to be right. Get an understanding of the truth as God has revealed it, or otherwise, all your zeal will be but wildfire, which will do mischief rather than good.

The zeal of unconverted men is *generally partial*. It may be a zeal for something good, but not for everything that is good. How zealous the Pharisee was for frequent ceremonial washings—he would not eat bread, if ever so hungry—till he had washed his hands. How excessively zealous he was to tithe the mint—it did not come to three farthings in a year—and the anise and the cumin—all these little matters must be attended

to! I think I see the man looking earnestly while he strains at the gnat; how he shudders lest by any means that horrid and monstrous insect should get into his wine; if it should possibly go down his throat, what pollution he would incur! But mark the hypocrite as he turns his head the other way, and he swallows a camel in the twinkling of an eye! While he can pay his mint and his anise and his cumin in full tithe, he can, at the same time, devour a widow's house and cry out against the Lord of life and glory, and plot and plan against the Savior till he has dragged Him to the cross! This is the unconverted zealot. Zealous he is for sect and party when the whole that the sect may hold is not of more value than the gnat, and yet great fundamental doctrinal truths of God are forgotten, as though they were of no value whatever. Brothers, may we be earnest men of God, but I pray that we may be zealous for all the truth of God; we must count no truth of God to be despicable, but take the whole Word of God as far as the Spirit of God shall reveal it unto us, and stand up for it in its entirety and completeness, and not be willing that the very least of Christ's commandments should be neglected or despised.

The zealot, again, while unconverted, is generally, (if it is in his power), a *persecutor*. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church." Paul verily thought that he was doing God a service when he drove men and women to prison and to death; and I doubt not there are many in this age most sincere zealots, who, if they would not quite delight in the sweet sacrifices of Smithfield, would, at any rate, like to pass a few repressive laws to put down "those wicked Dissenters" and ordain one or two salutary penalties by which "those quarrelsome Baptists" might have their tongues clipped a little shorter, that they might not speak out quite so plainly concerning the infamies of the state church. Doubtless there is a tendency with us all to wish to impose our own opinions upon others by all available means.

The exaggeration of anxiety for our fellow men would lead us to adopt wrong means to make them of a right opinion; we forget that men's consciences and judgments are never touched by such rude or vulgar means as threats or penalties. We should always feel that consciences and hearts are under the jurisdiction of the Most High, and in no sense whatever are they to be brought under the jurisdiction of Pope or potentate, or of any of us, no matter how orthodox we may conceive ourselves to be. Strive earnestly for your faith, but strive lawfully. Contend zealously for the truth, but let the only fire you use be love, and the only sword the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. But zealots without grace are generally persecutors.

Without divine grace, zealots are very bitter towards their professed brethren. We read in the epistle of the apostle James, of some who were full of strife and envy, and were yet members of the Church. From such zeal may the Lord of hosts deliver us! Our brethren in the fellowship with us are not to be convinced of their errors by being knocked on the head, but by having the candle held to their eyes. If we can teach them the truth as it is in Jesus, it shall be well; but as for carnal contention and persecution— let it be far from us.

This ungraceful picture of the zealot without Christ is not complete unless we remark that often *his aims are sinister*. We read of some in the epistle to the Corinthians who did zealously affect the Corinthians, but not well, for they slandered the apostle Paul; they denied his apostleship, they said that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech was contemptible; and yet they appeared very zealous, indeed, far more zealous than Paul, because they wanted to alienate the mind of the Corinthian church from the apostle, and get themselves to be made masters in God's heritage. Let us beware of a zeal for lifting up ourselves. Brothers, if we preach Christ with a view



to get ourselves honored by it, we prostitute the sacred things of God, and are guilty of that very sin which was accursed in Belshazzar, when he took the golden cups of the sanctuary to drink in them to his own delight. Zeal must be pure. It may be fire, but it must be fire from off the altar, or else if we minister with any other fire, like Nadab and Abihu, we may be slain before the Lord. O that we would search our heart so as to be quite sure that we have no aim in the entire world but Christ—“God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You may shoot well, you brave archers, but if you aim at the wrong target you will not win the prize. If you aim at anything but your Lord’s honor, you shall never hear it said, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

To close this very sorry account of the unconverted zealot, he is generally but *temporary in his zeal*. If the zeal is good, it dies out before long. The apostle Paul says, “It is good to be zealously affected *always* in a good thing.” Some of you are mightily zealous at a prayer meeting and grow intensely warmhearted after a season of revival—you are consecrated to God most marvelously for a month or two; you live consistently for a few weeks; you are diligent in the use of the means of grace for a short time. And then—well, you have had enough of it, I suppose, and you think enough to be as good as a feast, and so you would have done with heavenly things—the wind blows from another quarter, and therefore, like the weathercock, you are turned by it in another way. Some of you would go to heaven, but you get plucked by the sleeve hellwards and cannot bear a hard pull—and so you turn away from Christ. One would think when you are sick that you were ripe for heaven, but when you get well, ah, how different! “When he was sick,” says an old legend, “the devil a monk would be,” but when he got well you know how he gave up his fine intentions. There are many now of the same sort. For a time,

they threaten to take the kingdom by storm; they censoriously rebuke the coldness of others; they vow to conquer hell and enter heaven, pushing the world before them and dragging the church after them; but in a short time, where are they? They have relapsed into their former lethargy, or perhaps they have taken their zeal with them into the camp of the adversary.

Such is the unconverted zealot. Allow two or three more words before we leave him. There is much about him to imitate. Unconverted as he is, mischievous as his zeal may be—if we could pluck that sword out of his hand—of how great a use might it be to us. If sinners are zealous in their sins, should not saints be zealous for their God? If the things of time can stir the human passions, should not the realities of eternity have a greater and more tremendously moving force? If these men will spend and be spent, and stretch every nerve and run the race merely for the crown of politics or of ambition, where are we? What idlers, what laggards we are, that we pursue the things of God with but half a heart!—

“Dear Lord, and shall we always live  
At this poor dying rate?”

Bear this other word, also, namely that we ought to look upon these zealots with hopefulness. When a man serves Baal thoroughly, it is a great pity and a thing to be deplored, but I think he is a man worth catching, and to be sought after. We know a sort of people who will never make much at anything. They are not very forward in sin. The devil himself cannot respect them much. They are such poor servants to him. If they ever become Christians, into the rear rank they must go; they need to be pressed forward, and receive from the strength of the Church, for they can never impart power to it; but when you get a man who is vigorous in the cause of Satan, when

sovereign grace brings him down, what a trophy he becomes of its power, and how gloriously he contends for the gospel of Christ! Look at Saul of Tarsus; no man more zealous against the gospel than he, and he is second to none when he becomes a preacher of the Word. Look at John Bunyan on the village green—never second, always the leader, whether it was the game of ball on Sunday, or ringing the church bells, or blasphemy—he was a prince in the devil's camp, and when he became a Christian, there was none like John Bunyan in thundering out the law, or preaching—fearless of pains and penalties—the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Master Bunyan says in his, *"Grace Abounding,"* that he was very hopeful for England, because the young men of his age were so very bad, since if God would convert them, they would make such good Christians by-and-by. And I feel a little of his mind; when I see a man come in here who is known to be a down-right sinner, I hope he may make an upright saint. Some have come in here who have been ringleaders, and have exceeded others in their sin, but instead of saying, "Their case is hopeless," I have thought—now let us pray with might and main that sovereign grace may overcome his sin—who knows what he may be able to accomplish for the Church if he is converted?

**II.** Now, for a more pleasing picture, namely, **THE TRUE CHRISTIAN ZEALOT**—*how his zeal manifests itself, how it is kept up, and what is to be said in commendation of it.*

The Christian zealot—*how his zeal manifests itself:* first, it manifests itself *in his private dealings with God.* The unconverted zealot is a hypocrite; he does not come to God in private. He may use a form of private prayer, but he has no true communion with God alone. The unconverted zealot has a religion on the surface, but there is no divine grace within. How different is it with the Christian! That is a remarkable passage in the revelation where zeal is coupled with repentance. "Be

zealous, therefore, and repent.” I may take this as an indication that, when a true Christian is zealous, he is zealous in repentance—his tears come welling up from his heart. Sin is not a little distasteful, but is exceedingly disgusting to him. His faith, too, is not merely a trembling recognition of the truth of God, but it is a firm grasp of everlasting verities. The Christian zealot, when he is alone with God, throws his whole heart into his service. Whatever may be the grace which is in exercise, he seeks to have it thoroughly and actively at work. If his heart is given to God, it is a heart full of holy fire, like a sacred censer. If he devotes himself in private to any hallowed deed of fellowship or communion with God, his heart wanders not—or if it wanders, he contends with it until he has bound it with cords—even with cords to the horns of the altar. Brethren, I wish you and I were more zealous. Alas, I have to complain of myself that when I try to pray, full often I cannot; when I would do good in the closet, evil is present with me. I wish I had power to walk with God as Enoch did, but the cares of the church, let alone the vanities of life, will creep in, and the soul comes out of the closet unrefreshed, very much because it has had no zeal in its closet exercises. The true Christian zealot seeks, above all things to make his private religion intensely energetic, knowing that it is the vital point of godliness.

The Christian zealot *may be recognized very manifestly by his prayers*. Hear his utterances in the prayer meeting. It is no repetition of a set of sacred phrases, no going over the metaphors which have become time-worn and tedious, but he prays like a man who means it. He comes up to heaven’s gate, grasps the knocker, and knocks, and knocks, and knocks again, waiting until the door is opened. He gets hold of the gates of heaven, and labors to shake them to and fro as though he would pull them up bolts and bars and all, as Samson did the gates of Gaza—rather than not prevail with God. These men,

like Elijah, have power to shut up heaven or to open its gates. Oh, that we had more of such in our midst. We have a few who, as soon as they stand up to pray, fire our hearts by their earnestness—may they be multiplied! The like is true of course of the private prayers of the Christian as well as of his public ones. Oh, brethren, we need more resolve when we go before God that we will have the blessing, more determination that we are asking what is according to His mind we will take no denial, but will say to the Angel, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Christians, seek to be zealots in prayer, pouring out your hearts like water before the Lord, and crying out with sighs and tears till, like your Master, you have been heard in that which you have petitioned.

But the zealot does not stop here. The Christian zealot is manifested *in his jealousy for God's honor*. The word jealous in its sound and sense is akin to the word zealous. Hear how Elijah uses it. He says, “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.” He saw Baal worshipped everywhere throughout Israel, and his heart was ready to break, and so the stern old man said, “Let me die—I am no better than my fathers.” How sternly he slew Baal's priests. What a spectacle was that when, after having mocked them because no fire came on their sacrifice, he stretched out his hands and cried, “Let it be known who is God!” And when the flame had come and his own sacrifice had been consumed, he said with a rough voice, “Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” Here was zeal for the Lord of hosts springing from an awful overwhelming jealousy for God's honor and a hatred of the idols which usurped His throne. See the same in Moses. With holy jealousy, he dashes the tablets of stone upon the ground, takes the golden calf, grinds it to powder, and makes a rebellious people drink of the bitter draught. Look at Phineas again, when he saw the people committing adultery as a part of the unclean rites with which

they worshipped the gods of Moab, he seized a javelin and ran them through, and so it is said the zeal of Phineas made an atonement before the Lord. We want something of that kind—a zeal for God which will smite all error with a ruthless hand, the iconoclastic zeal which will break to pieces images of silver and of gold, however prettily they may be cast or engraved; which will tear down the toys of Popery, and tread the whole in the mire as things worse than worthless because they come in the way of the Lord God of hosts. Away with the softness which will not let some of my brothers denounce an error lest they should violate charity! The velvet in their mouths prevents their dealing with antichrist as it ought to be dealt with. The day is come in which the Romish and Anglican antichrists are to have no tender words used towards them! It must be war to the knife for God and for His truth against the lie which in modern times has impudence enough to show its face again—I mean the lie that the sacrament can save, that baptism can regenerate, or that the Lord's Supper is a channel of salvation! Up with divine grace and down with Sacramentarianism; up with the truths of God forever and down with lies! A man is no zealot and cannot be called Zelotes unless he has a holy jealousy for the honor of Christ, and His crown, and His truth.

Nor is this all; true zeal will show itself *in the abundance of a man's labors and gifts*. Paul commends the zeal of the Corinthians, because they were always ready to minister to his necessities. He says, "Concerning the ministering of the saints, you have no need that I speak unto you." Zeal labors for Christ. My brethren, if you want a picture of zeal, take the apostle. How he compasses sea and land! Storms cannot stop him, mountains cannot impede his progress. He is beaten with rods, he is stoned, he is cast into prison, but the invincible hero of the cross presses on in the holy war, until he is taken up to receive a crown of glory. We do little or nothing, the most of us; we

fritter away our time. O that we could live while we live; but our existence—that is all we can call it—our existence, what a poor thing it is! We run like shallow streams—we have not force enough to turn the mill of industry, and have not depth enough to bear the vessel of progress, and we have not flood enough to cheer the refreshments of poverty. We are dry too often in the summer's drought, and we are frozen in the winter's cold. O that we might become broad and deep like the mighty stream that bears a navy, and gladdens a nation. O that we may become inexhaustible and permanent rivers of usefulness through the abundant springs from where our supply comes—even the Spirit of the living God.

The Christian zealot may be known *by the anguish which his soul feels when his labors for Christ are not successful*—the tears that channel his cheeks when sinners are not saved. Do not tell me of zeal that only moves the tongue, or the foot, or the hand; we must have a zeal which moves the whole heart. We cannot advance so far as the Savior's bloody sweat, but to something like it the Christian ought to attain when he sees the tremendous clouds of sin and the tempest of God's gathering wrath. How can I see souls damned, without emotion? How can I hear Christ's name blasphemed, without a shudder? How can I think of the multitudes that prefer ruin to salvation, without a pang? Believe me, brethren, if you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell, as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous; you do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief, and yet must beat high with holy ardor; the heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God's glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know.

And to close this point of how zeal manifests itself, let me say that it is always seen, where it is genuine, *in a vehement love and attachment to the Person of the Savior*. This is why we have not more zeal—because often the Christ preached is not a personal Christ. Have not I frequently said in this pulpit that nothing can make a man zealous like attachment to a person? When Napoleon’s soldiers won so many victories, and especially in the earlier part of his career, when against such deadly odds they earned such splendid triumphs, what was the reason? The “little corporal” was there, and whenever it came to a desperate rush, he was the first to cross the bridge or charge the enemy, always exposing himself to danger; and their attachment to his person, and their love and admiration of his valor, made them follow at his heels, swift to victory. Have not we heard of those who threw themselves in the way of the cannon ball to save his life? There could not have been such triumphs if there had not been a man who knew how to govern men by attaching them to himself. And oh, the Person of the Savior! What attachment can there be equal to that which binds a Christian to his Lord? What person can there ever be out of whose lips come such golden chains to bind all hearts? When we see Him, our hearts glow with sacred fervor; when we think of Him, our soul is all on fire. What can we not do in His presence? What will we not suffer when He cheers us? There are no impossibilities—no, even difficulties have ceased to be, when Jesus Christ shall come, and our hearts are full of love to Him. It is a constant and unfailing sign of a true zealot, that his attachment to his Master’s Person is deep and fervent, and he cannot forget Him who redeemed him by blood.

This brings us now, in the next place, to think awhile of *how this zeal is maintained and kept up*. To keep up a good fire of zeal, we must have much fuel, and the fire will partake of the quality of the fuel, so that it must be good firing to make holy



zeal. If I understand aright, zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and genuine zeal draws its life and vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Next to this, zeal feeds upon truths like these. It is stirred by the ruin of sinners. The very sight of sinners makes a right-hearted man zealous for their conversion. Ride mile after mile through our streets, turn down the narrower streets, enter the courts, go down the alleys—do not be disgusted with those tumbling houses—go in and go upstairs; see how many there are in one room, mark what poverty, what squalor, what filth! Go into certain quarters and see what ignorance, what crime! I think the city missionary has constantly before him enough to keep his zeal at fever heat, and if we ourselves went more often into some of the lowest dens of this huge city, we would go back to our closets, crying, “Gracious God! I have not thought of these people as I ought to, for instead of being up and doing with all my might, I have been trifling and wasting my time.” Well, but what is London? This nation of London, what is it? It is only a drop in the bucket compared with the millions who are still in darkness. Let any man think upon India; let him reflect, if he will, upon China; let him take any one country and consider that there is not a missionary to a million in many of those places, and that the missionaries who are there might many of them as well have been at home, for they are missionaries who Christianize people by baptizing them, and know little about the Spirit’s work upon the soul.

What is said about many of the converts made by mere ritual preaching and by baptismal ceremonies? Why it is well known that in some parts of heathendom the worst scoundrels are the nominal Christians—the reason being because they were not made Christians by being converted, but by being baptized, and so an indelible dishonor is put upon Christ by carrying on missionary operations on the principle of baptizing

people who are not Christians, and labeling them the people of Christ, while in their hearts, they are more deceitful than the heathen themselves. We must think of the need for a sound, honest preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the doctrines which really change the soul, and the coming down of the Holy Spirit to deal personally with individuals. All wholesale conversion of tribes and nations by calling them Christians, when they are merely civilized, is an evil and an abomination! The needs of the age are enough, if a man has any sense of what eternal realities are, to make us zealous—zealous to the highest pitch.

And next, Christian zeal feeds itself upon *a sense of gratitude*—

“Loved of my God, for Him again,  
With love intense I burn,  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
I choose Him in return.”

Look to the hole of the pit from where you were dug, and you will see abundant reason why you should spend and be spent for God!

Zeal for God feeds itself upon *the thought of the eternal future*. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of hell and it cannot slumber—it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of heaven, and it cannot but bestir itself. Zeal for God thinks of death, and hears the hoofs of the white horse with the skeleton rider close behind. Zeal for God feels that all it can do is little compared with what is needed, and that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore, it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord.

Above all, zeal for God feeds itself on *love to Christ*. Lady Powerscourt says somewhere, “If we want to be thoroughly hot

with zeal, we must go near to the furnace of the Savior's love." Get to know how Christ loved you, and you cannot but love Him. Do but know how He was spit upon and despised, and how He bled and died for us, and we cannot but feel that we can do and bear all things for His name's sake.

Above all, Christian zeal must be sustained by a *vigorous inner life*. If we let our inner life dwindle, if it begins to be dwarfish, if our heart beats slowly before God, we shall not know zeal; but if all is strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ, come and His will done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

I have to close by *commending zeal*; let my words be few, but let them be weighty here. In commending zeal, let me say, I think it should commend itself to every Christian man and woman without a word of mine, but if you must have it, remember that *God Himself is zealous*. We read that when Christ comes as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, then the government is to be upon His shoulders, and of His kingdom there is to be no end. But Scripture adds, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." God has been zealous in judgment. Ezekiel tells us that God was zealous when He came forth to destroy His foes, but oh, how zealous He is in divine grace! It is an amazing thing that we should use such language, but the Scripture is our warrant, when God puts His hands to the work of saving the elect, He is filled with zeal! There is no slumber, no lack of diligence with God in the work of conversion and saving. For Zion's sake, He never rests, nor will He rest till Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. God is earnest. God is zealous; children of God, be imitators of Him, as dear children

*Christ was zealous*. We read of Him that the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up, and when He took the scourge of

small cords and purged the temple, John tells us that it was written of Him, “The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up.” A prophet tells us that He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. He had not zeal over a *part* of Him, but was clothed with it as with some great cloak covering Him from head to foot. Christ was all zeal. “Do you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” is one of His utterances, while yet a child; and from the very first to the last, it was His meat and His drink to do His Father’s will. At what a rate He drove! How swift the chariot wheels of duty went with Him till the axles grew hot with speed. Brethren, you have Christ for an example. Does not this suffice you?

Surely I can only descend in argument, but not ascend—see the holy angels, who are to be your blessed companions, are they not flames of fire? Are they not called seraphs because they fly like flames upon their Master’s errands? Be not slow where angels are like flashes of lightning. If we would see any success come to the church; and I know that is dear to us; if we would see souls converted, and I know it is the object of our daily prayers; if we would hear the cry that, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ,” and I know that this is our passionate desire; if you would see crowns put upon the head of the Savior and His throne lifted high, and I know this is your great ambition; if you would see Jehovah, your Father, glorified even to the ends of the earth, then be filled with zeal! Under God, the way of the world’s conversion must be by the zeal of the Church. Simon Zelotes must lead the host; the rest may follow in their places—knowledge, patience, courage, prudence, every grace shall do exploits, but this shall be first; this shall bear the standard high! Zeal for God, zeal for His truth; this shall be in the procession, and may you stand side by side with the most zealous in the day of conflict, that you may be there in the hour of victory.

I cannot this morning, address you as I would desire, for I cannot feel my own zeal to be what I would have it be. O for the zeal of Wesley and Whitefield, the zeal of men who were always preaching or praying, men who seemed as if they knew no weariness, or shook it off as dust from off their feet! Oh, to have the zeal of apostolic times again, when the very least among you would be ready to be martyrs for Christ, if need be; and when all of you would testify of Him, wherever you were called to go. Oh for more zeal in the household, that you might seek more anxiously the conversion of your children; more zeal in the workshop, that you might communicate to your fellow workmen the spirit which actuates and moves you. Oh for more zeal in the church, and church meetings, and prayer meetings, that everything might be done with spirit. Above all, oh, for more zeal in the pulpit! Holy fire, come down! We have the wood, we have the altar, we have the sacrifice, but we need the fire! Have you not remarked, brethren, how much a man may do who is clothed with zeal? Some of our brothers in the ministry to whom we have listened, have stirred our passions, have made our blood boil after a sacred fashion, and yet their talents have been very few, and we felt, while they were speaking, that they made better use of one talent than some have made of ten. Believe me, it is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful, it is not the extent of your talent or tact, though these have their place, it is your zeal—your ZEAL that shall perform God's work!

May I entreat you, as members of this church, not to let your zeal die out. What prayer meetings we have had! Shall we ever forget Park Street—those prayer meetings when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dust, and any language of mine would have been a mere impertinence? What zeal you have had! Some of you have

sought for the conversion of souls. When I look upon some of you, I know you are spiritual mothers and fathers in Israel—not to ones or twos, but scores! Shall your zeal relax? We have, by God's grace, lived to see many of our enemies clothed with shame, we have preached the Word till that Word begins to tell and make the solid rocks of error shake. Will you draw back? Will you lose your force? Will you slacken in prayer? Will you refuse to receive the blessing which awaits you? Will you take your heads from the crown when it is ready to descend? I pray you do not so! Let us be banded together as one man; let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; let us pray with fervor, let us live in holiness, let us preach constantly, and preach with fire, and let us so live that we may impress our age, and leave our footprints on the sands of time.

As for some of you who never were zealous, who are the fathers of no spiritual children—as for some of you, whose religion gets into a very narrow compass, and is good for very little when it gets there, I pray you bestir yourselves. If your religion is a lie, do not profess it; if it is a farce, do not enslave yourselves to it; but if there is anything in religion, it is worth everything; it cannot sit second at the table—it must have the first place. The Christian is to be, first of all, a Christian, but next to that a tradesman or what you will—but first of all, a Christian. The first thing with the believer is his Lord. Christ will be nowhere if He is not first and chief, and that religion is vain and void which does not fill the soul, and take up the throne of the heart. May God allow us, then, to wear the character, if not the name of Simon Zelotes, and then we will wait at His footstool, and serve Him after such sort as He shall help us to do and His shall be all the praise.

But, ah, we must be converted first! So let the sinner remember that his first business is with *this* text—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that is, trust

Jesus, for it is written, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.” God grant you divine grace to trust Christ, and then to be zealous for Him. Amen.

## 640 THE GOSPEL'S POWER IN A CHRISTIAN LIFE – PHIL. 1:27

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.” — Philippians 1:27

THE WORD “conversation” does not merely mean our talk, one with another, but the whole course of our life and behavior in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship, and we are to let our whole citizenship—our actions as citizens of the new Jerusalem—be such as becomes the gospel of Christ. Observe, dear friends, the difference between the exhortations of the legalists, and those of the gospel. He who would have you perfect in the flesh, exhorts you to work that you may be saved, that you may accomplish a meritorious righteousness of your own, and so may be accepted before God. But he who is taught in the doctrines of divine grace, urges you to holiness for quite another reason. He believes you are saved, because you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he speaks to as many as are saved in Jesus, and then he asks them to make their actions conformable to their position; he only seeks what he may reasonably expect to receive—“Let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ. You have been saved by it, you profess to glory in it, you desire to extend it; let then your



conversation be such as becomes it.” The one, you perceive, bids you to work that you may enter heaven by your working; the other exhorts you to labor because heaven is yours as the gift of divine grace, and he would have you act as one who is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Some persons cannot hear an exhortation without at once crying out that we are legal. Such persons will always find this tabernacle the wrong place for them to feed in. We are delighted to preach good high doctrine, and to insist upon it that salvation is of grace alone; but we are equally delighted to preach good high practice and to insist upon it, that that grace which does not make a man better than his neighbors, is a grace which will never take him to heaven, nor render him acceptable before God.

I have already remarked that the exhortation is given in a form which is highly reasonable. The followers of any other religion, as a rule, are conformed to their religion. No nation has ever yet risen above the character of its so-called gods. Look at the disciples of Venus—were they not sunk deep in licentiousness? Look at the worshippers of Bacchus; let their Bacchanalian rebels tell how they entered into the character of their deity. The worshippers to this day of the goddess Kale—the goddess of thieves and murderers—the Thugs—enter most heartily into the spirit of the idol that they worship. We do not marvel at the crimes of the ancients when we recollect the gods whom they adored—Moloch, who delighted in the blood of little children; Jupiter, Mercury and the like, whose actions stored in the classical dictionary are enough to pollute the minds of youth. We marvel not that licentiousness abounded, for “like gods, like people.” “A people are never better than their religion,” it has often been said—but in most cases they are rather worse. It is strictly in accordance with nature that a man’s religion should season his conversation. Paul puts it,

therefore, to you who profess to be saved by Jesus Christ, “Let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.”

To get at this we must meditate for two or three minutes upon *what the gospel is*; then take up the points in which *our conversation ought to be like to the gospel*; and finally, utter a few earnest words to press upon professors of religion here *the stern necessity of letting their conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ*.

**I. “THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!” WHAT IS IT?** We look at the last two words, “of Christ.” Indeed, if you understand Christ, you understand the gospel. Christ is the author of it; He, in the council chamber of eternity, proposed to become the surety for poor fallen man; He, in the fullness of time, worked out eternal redemption for as many as His Father had given Him. He is the author of it as its architect and as its builder. We see in Christ Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel. He has provided in the treasury of grace all that is necessary to make the gospel the gospel of our salvation. And as He is the author of it, so He is the matter of it. It is impossible to preach the gospel without preaching the person, the work, the offices, and the character of Christ. If Christ is preached, the gospel is promulgated, and if Christ is put in the background, then there is no gospel declared. “God forbid that I should know anything among you,” said the apostle, “save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” and so saying, he was carrying out his commission to preach the gospel both to Jews and to Gentiles. The sum total, the essential, the marrow—what the old Puritans would have called the quintessence of the gospel is, Christ Jesus! So that when we have done preaching the gospel we may say, “Now of the things which we have spoken He is the sum,” and we may point to Him in the manger, to Him on the cross, to Him risen, to Him coming in the second advent, to Him reigning as Prince of the kings of the earth—yes, point to Him everywhere, as the sum total of the gospel.

It is also called, “The gospel of Christ,” because it is He who will be the finisher of it; He will put the finishing stroke to the work as He laid the foundation stone. The believer does not begin in Christ, and then seek perfection in himself. No, as we run the heavenly race, we are still looking to Jesus. As His hand first tore away the sin, which does so easily beset us, and helped us to run the race with patience, so that same hand shall hold out the olive branch of victory, shall weave it into a wreath of glory, and put it about our head. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ—*His* property; it glorifies *His* person; it is sweet with the savor of *His* name. It bears throughout, the mark of His artistic fingers. If the heavens are the work of God’s fingers, and the moon and the stars are by His ordinance, so we may say of the whole plan of salvation—the whole of it, great Jesus, is Your workmanship, and by Your ordinance it stands fast.

It is, “The gospel of Jesus Christ,” and though hundreds of times this has been explained, it will not be amiss to go over it again. It is the “*good-spell*,” the “*good news*,” of Jesus Christ, and it is “good news” emphatically, because it clears away sin—the worst evil on earth. Better still, it sweeps away death and hell! Christ came into the world to take sin upon His shoulders and to carry it away, hurling it into the red sea of His atoning blood. Christ, the Scapegoat, took the sin of His people upon His own head and bore it all away into the wilderness of forgetfulness, where, if it is searched for, it shall be found no more forever. This is “good news,” for it tells that the cancer at the vitals of humanity has been cured; that the leprosy which rose, even to the very brow of manhood, has been taken away; Christ has filled a better stream than the river Jordan, and now says to the sons of men, “Go, wash and be clean.”

Besides removing the worst of ills, the gospel is “good news,” because it brings the best of blessings. What does it do but give life to the dead? It opens dumb lips, unstops deaf ears,

and unseals blind eyes. Does it not make earth the abode of peace? Has it not shut the doors of hell upon believers, and opened the gates of heaven to all who have learned to trust in Jesus' name? "Good news!" Why that word "good" has got a double meaning when it is applied to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Well were angels employed to go and tell it, and happy are the men, who spend and are spent, in the proclamation of such glad tidings of great joy. "God is reconciled!" "Peace on earth!" "Glory to God in the highest!" "Goodwill towards men!" God is glorified in salvation, sinners are delivered from the wrath to come, and hell does not receive the multitudes of men, but heaven is filled with the countless host redeemed by blood!

It is "good news," too, because it is a thing that could not have been invented by the human intellect. It was news to angels! They have not ceased to wonder at it yet, they still stand looking upon the mercy seat, desiring to know more of it. It will be news in eternity; we shall—

"Sing with rapture and surprise,  
His loving kindness in the skies."

The "good news," put simply into a few words, is just this—"That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." So much, then, for *what the gospel is*.

**II.** Now, I am not going to speak to those who do not welcome the gospel—I will speak to them another time; I pray God helps them to believe it, but today I have especially to

speak to believers. The text says we are to **LET OUR CONVERSATION BE SUCH AS BECOMES THE GOSPEL.**

What sort of conversation, then, shall we have? In the first place, *the gospel is very simple*. It is unadorned; no meretricious ornaments to clog the pile. It is simple—"Not with enticing words of man's wisdom." It is grandly sublime in its simplicity. Let the Christian be such. It does not become the Christian minister to be arrayed in blue, and scarlet, and fine linen, and vestments, and robes, for these belong to Antichrist, and are described in the Book of the Revelation, as the sure marks of the whore of Babylon. It does not become the Christian man or the Christian woman to be guilty of spending hours in the adornment of his or her person. Our adornment should be, "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behavior, that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. Those who labor to make themselves admirable in appearance, by gaudy ornaments, miss the road; beauty is its own adornment and, "She is most adorned when unadorned the most." The Christian ought always to be simple in all respects. I think, wherever you find him, you ought not to need a key to him. He should not be like certain books that you cannot make out without having somebody tell you the hard words. He should be a transparent man like Nathaniel—"An Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." The man who catches the spirit of his Master is, like Christ, a child-man, a man-child. You know they called Him, "That holy child, Jesus," so let us be, remembering that, "Except we are converted and become as *little children*," who are eminently simple and child-like, "we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In the next place, if our conversation is such as becomes the gospel, we shall remember that the gospel is *pre-eminently true*. There is nothing in the gospel which is false; no admixture,

nothing put in as an “*argumentum ad hominem*” to catch the popular ear. It tells the truth—the naked truth—and if men dislike it, the gospel cannot help it; it is gold without dross; it is pure water without admixture. Now, such should the Christian be. He should make his conversation *true*. The saints are men of honor, but sometimes, brethren, I think that many of us talk too much to speak nothing but the truth of God. I do not know how people could bring out broadsheets every morning with so much news if it were all true; I suppose there must be a little padding to fill it up, and some of that is very poor stuff. And people who keep on talking, talking, talking, cannot grind all meal; surely it must be, some of it, rather coarse bran. And in the conversation of a good many professing Christians, how much there is that is scandal, if not slander, uttered against other Christians? How much uncharitableness, if not willful lies, is spoken by some professors? Too often a rebuke is taken up heedlessly, and repeated without any care being taken to ascertain whether it is true or not. The Christian’s lips should speak truth when lies drop from the lips of all other men. A Christian should never need to take an oath because his word is as good as an oath—his, “Yes,” should be “Yes.” And his, “No, no.” It is for him to so live and speak that he shall be in good repute in all society—if not for the etiquette of his manners, certainly for the truthfulness of his utterances. Show me a man who is habitually or frequently a liar, and you show me a man who will have his portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. I do not care to what denomination of Christians he may belong, if a man speaks the thing that is not, I am sure he is none of Christ’s; and it is very sad to know that there are some in all fellowships who have this great and grievous fault—that you cannot trust them in what they say. God deliver us from that! Let our conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ, and then it will be invariably

truthful; or, if there is error in it, it will always be through misadventure, and never on purpose or from carelessness.

In the next place, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a very *fearless gospel*. It is the very reverse of that pretty thing called “modern charity.” The last created devil is “modern charity.” “Modern charity” goes cap in hand round to us all, and it says, “You are *all* right, every one of you! Do not quarrel any longer! Sectarianism is a horrid thing—down with it! Down with it!” And so it tries to induce all sorts of persons to withhold a part of what they believe—to silence the testimony of all Christians upon points wherein they differ. I believe that that thing called Sectarianism nowadays is none other than true honesty. Be a Sectarian, my brother—be profoundly a Sectarian! I mean by that, hold everything which you see to be in God’s Word with a tighter grasp, and do not give up even the little pieces of truth. At the same time, let that Sectarianism, which makes you hate another man because he does not agree with you—let that be far from you! And never consent to that unholy league and covenant, which seems to be rife throughout our country, which would put a padlock on the mouth of every man and send us all about as if we were dumb—which says to me, “You must not speak against the errors of such-and-such a church.” And to another, “You must not reply.” We cannot but speak! If we did not, the stones in the street might cry out against us!

That kind of charity is unknown to the gospel. Now hear the Word of God, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not”—what? “Shall get to heaven some other way”? NO!—“shall be damned”! That is the gospel. You perceive how boldly it launches out its censure? It does not pretend, “You may reject Me and go by another road, and at last get safely to your journey’s end!” No, no, no!—you “*shall be damned*,” it says! Do you not perceive how Christ puts it? Some teachers come into the world and say to all, “Yes,

gentlemen, by your leave, you are all right. I have a point or two that you have not taught, just make room for me; I will not turn you out; I can stand in the same temple as yourself.” But hear what Christ says—“All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” Hear what His servant Paul says, “Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you”—what then?—“Let him be excused for his mistake?” No! But, “Let him be *accursed*”! Now, this is strong language, but mark you, this is just how the Christian ought to live. As the gospel is very fearless in what it has to say, so let the Christian always be. It strikes me that a “living” which becomes the gospel of Christ, is always a bold and fearless kind of living! Some people go crawling through the world as if they asked some great man’s permission to live. They do not know their own minds; they take their words out of their mouths, and look at them, and ask a friend or two’s opinion. “What do you think of these words?” And when these friends censure them, they put them in again and will not say them. Like jellyfish, they have no backbone. Now God has made men upright, and it is a noble thing for a man to stand erect on his own feet; and it is a nobler thing still for a man to say that in Christ Jesus he has received that freedom which is freedom indeed, and therefore he will not be the slave of any man.

“O God,” says David, “I am Your servant, for You have loosed my bonds.” Happy is he whose bonds are loosed! Let your eyes be like that of an eagle, yes, let them be brighter still; let them never be dimmed by the eyes of any other man. Let your heart be like that of the lion, fearless! Say of yourself—

“Careless, myself a dying man,  
Of dying men’s esteem,”



I must live as in the sight of God, as I believe I should live, and then let man say his best or say his worst—it shall be no more than the chirping of a grasshopper when the sun goes down. “Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man that is but a worm?” Make yourselves like men! Be strong! Fear not! For only so will your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ.

But again, the gospel of Christ is *very gentle*. Hear it speak! “Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Here is its spirit in its founder—“He will not quench the smoking flax. A bruised reed He will not break.” Moreover, bad temper, snapping off of people’s heads, making men offenders for a word—all this, is quite contrary to the gospel. There are some people who seem to have been nursed upon vinegar, and whose entire attitude far better suits Sinai than Zion; you might think that they had always come to the mount that might not be touched, which burns with fire, for they seem themselves to burn with fire. I may say to them, that the best of them is sharper than a thorn hedge. Now, dear friends, let it never be so with us. Be firm, be bold, be fearless; but be cautious. If you have a lion’s heart, have a lady’s hand; let there be such a gentleness about your carriage that the little children may not be afraid to come to you, and the publican and harlot may not be driven away by your hostility, but invited to goodness by the gentleness of your words and acts.

Again, the gospel of Christ is *very loving*. It is the speech of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. It tells us that, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It proclaims in every word the divine grace of Him, “Who loved us and gave Himself for us.” “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” This same mind which was in Christ Jesus should

dwell richly in us. His last command to His disciples was, "Love one another." He who loves is born of God, while without this grace, whatever we may think of ourselves, or others may think of us, we are really, in God's sight, nothing better than sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Is not this an age in which we shall do well to direct our attention to the flower of paradise? The atmosphere of the church should foster this heavenly plant to the highest perfection. The world ought to point to us and say, "See how these Christians love one another? Not in word only, but in deed and in truth." I care not for that love which calls me a dearly beloved brother, and then if I happen to differ in sentiment and practice, treats me as a schismatic, denies me the rights of the brotherhood, and if I do not choose to subscribe to an arbitrarily imposed contribution to its funds, seizes my goods and sells them in the name of the law, order, and Church of Christ. From all such sham love, good Lord, deliver us; but oh, for more real hearty union and love to all the saints—for more of that realization of the fact that we are one in Christ Jesus. At the same time pray for more love to all men. We ought to love all our hearers, and the gospel is to be preached by us to every creature. I hate sin everywhere, but I love and wish to love yet more and more every day, the souls of the worst and vilest of men. Yes, the gospel speaks of love, and I must breathe it forth, too, in every act and deed. If our Lord was love incarnate, and we are His disciples, "Let all take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him."

The gospel of Christ, again, is the *gospel of mercy*, and if any man would act as becomes the gospel, he must be a man of mercy. Do I see him? He is praying. He has been to the sacramental table, and he has been drinking the wine which betokens the Savior's blood—what a good man he is! But see him on Monday—he has got his hands on his brother's throat,

with—"Pay me what you owe!" Is that such as becomes the gospel of Christ? There he sits—he will give his subscription to a charity, but he will grind down the needle-woman, he will get fat on her blood and bones; he will take a grasp, if he can, of the poor, and sell them, and devour them as though they were bread, and yet, at the same time, "for a pretense he will make long prayers." Is this such as becomes the gospel of Christ? I think not. The gospel of Christ is mercy, generosity, hope. It receives the beggar and hears his cry; it picks up even the vile and undeserving, and scatters lavish blessings upon them and it fills the bosom of the naked and of the hungry with good things. Let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ. You *miserly* and *stingy* people have not a conversation such as becomes the gospel of Christ. There might be plenty of money in God's treasury, for God's Church and for God's poor, if there were not some who seem to live only to amass, and to hoard; their life is diametrically opposed to the whole current and spirit of the gospel of Christ Jesus. Forgive all who offend you, help all, as far as you are able to do it, live a life of unselfishness; be prepared, as much as lies in you, to do good unto all men, and especially to the household of faith, and so shall your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ.

I must not, however, omit to say that the gospel of Christ is *holy*. You cannot find it excusing sin. It pardons it, but not without an atonement so dreadful, that sin never seems so exceedingly sinful as in the act of mercy which puts it away. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" is the cry of the gospel, and such is the cry of cherubim and seraphim. Now, if our conversation is to be like the gospel, we must be holy too. There are some things which the Christian must not even name, much less indulge in. The grosser vices are to him things to be hidden behind the curtain, and totally unknown. The amusements and pleasures

of the world, so far as they may be innocent, are his, as they are other men's; but wherein they become sinful or doubtful, he discards them with disgust, for he has secret sources of joy, and needs not therefore to go and drink of that muddy river, of which thirsty worldlings are so fond. He seeks to be holy, as Christ is holy; and there is no conversation which becomes the gospel of Christ except that.

**III.** Dear friends, I might thus continue, for the subject is a very wide one, and I only stop because, unhappily for me, though perhaps happily for your patience, my time has gone. Having just indicated what the Christian life ought to be, I must, in a few words, plead with you that by the power of God's Holy Spirit, you will seek to make your lives such. I could mention many reasons—I will only give you one or two. The first is, if you do not live like this, you will make your fellow members who are innocent of your sin, suffer. This ought to be a very convincing motive. If a Christian could dishonor himself, and bear the blame alone, why he might put up with it, but you cannot. I say, sir, if you are seen intoxicated, or if you are known to fall into some sin of the flesh, you will make the life of every poor girl in the church harder than it is, and every poor young man who has to put up with persecution will feel that you have put a sting into the arrows of the wicked, which could not otherwise have been there. You sin against the congregation of God's people. I know there are some of you here who have to suffer a good deal for Christ's sake. The jeer rings in your ears from morning to night, and you learn to put up with it manfully; but it is very hard when they can say to you, "Look at So-and-So—he is a church member, look at what he did—you are all a parcel of hypocrites!" Now, my dear friends, you know that is not true; you know that there are many in our churches of whom the world is not worthy—the excellent, the

devout, the Christ-like. Do not sin, then, for their sakes, lest you make them to be grieved and sorely vexed.

Again, do you not see how you make your Lord suffer, for they do not lay your sins merely at *your* door, but they say they spring from your religion. If they would impute the folly to the fool I might not care, but they impute it to the wisdom which would have made that fool wise, if he could have learned. They will lay it at my door—that does not matter much—I have long lost my character; but I cannot bear it should be laid at Christ's door—at the door of the gospel. When I said just now that I had lost my character, I meant just this, that the world loathes me, and I would not have it do otherwise, so let it, I say, there is no love lost between us. If the world hates Christ's minister, he can only say he desires that he may never inherit the curse of those who love the world, “in whom the love of the Father is not.” Yet it has always been the lot of the true Christian minister to be the butt of slander and, nevertheless, to glory in the cross with all its shame. But I know, dear friends, you would not, any of you, wish that I should bear the reproach of your sins, and yet I have to do it very often—not very often for many, but for some. There are those, of whom I might tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; and some others whom we would pluck out of the fire, hating the garment spotted with the flesh, but they bring sad dishonor upon us, upon the ministry, upon the gospel, and upon Christ Himself. You do not want to do that! At least, I hope you do not; then let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ.

And then, remember, dear friends, unless your conversation is such, you will pull down all the witness that you have ever borne for Christ. How can your Sunday school children believe what you tell them, when they see your actions contradict your teaching? How can your own children at home

believe in your religion, when they see the godlessness of your life? The men at the factory will not believe in your going to prayer meeting, when they see you walking inconsistently among them. Oh, the great thing the church needs is more holiness! The worst enemies of the church are not the infidels—really, one does not know who the infidels are nowadays; they are so small a fry, and so few of them, that one would have to hunt to find them out. No, the worst enemies of the church are the hypocrites, the formalists, the mere professors, the inconsistent walkers. You, if there are any such here—you pull down the walls of Jerusalem, you open the gates to her foes, and, as much as lies in you, you serve the devil! May God forgive you! May Christ forgive you! May you be washed from this atrocious sin! May you be brought humbly to the foot of the cross, to accept mercy, which, until now, you have rejected!

It is shocking to think how persons dare to remain members of Christian Churches, and even to enter the pulpit, when they are conscious that their private life is foul. Oh, how can they do it? How is it that their hearts have grown so hard? What? Has the devil bewitched them? Has he turned them away from being men, and made them as devilish as himself, that they should dare to pray in public, and to sit at the sacramental table, and to administer ordinances while their hands are foul, and their hearts unclean and their lives are full of sin? I charge you, if there are any of you whose lives are not consistent, give up your profession, or else make your lives what they should be. May the Eternal Spirit, who still winnows His Church, blow away the chaff, and leave only the good golden wheat upon the floor! And if you know yourselves to be living in any sin, may God help you to mourn over it, to loathe it, to go to Christ about it tonight—to take hold of Him, to wash His feet with

your tears, to repent unfeignedly—and then to begin anew in His strength, a life which shall be such as becomes the gospel.

I think I hear some ungodly person here saying, “Well I do not make any profession, I am all right.” Now, listen, dear friend, listen! I have got a word for you. A man is brought up before the magistrates, and he says, “Well, I never made any profession of being an honest man.” “Oh,” says the magistrate, “there is six months for you then”—you see he is a villain outright. And you who say, “Oh, I never made any profession,” why, by putting yourselves on that ground, you place yourselves among the condemned ones. But some people make a boast of it. “I never made a profession.” Never made a profession of doing your duty to your Maker? Never made a profession of being obedient to the God in whose hands your breath is? Never made a profession of being obedient to the gospel? Why, it will be very short work with you, when you come to be tried at last; there will need to be no witnesses, for you never made a profession—you never pretended to be right. What would you think of a man who said, “Well, I never made a profession of speaking the truth.”? “Well,” says another, “I never made a profession of being chaste.” Why, you would say, “Let us get out of this fellow’s company, because evidently nothing but evil can come from him, for he is not good enough even to make a profession!”

Now, I put that strongly that you may remember it; will you go home and just meditate on this—“I never made a profession of being saved. I never made a profession of repenting of my sins, and therefore I am every day making a profession of being God’s enemy, of being impenitent, of being unbelieving. And when the devil comes to look for his own, he will know me, for I make a profession of being one of his by not making a profession of being one of Christ’s.” The fact is, I pray God to bring us all here, first to be Christ’s, and then to

make a profession of it. Oh that your heart might be washed in Jesus' blood, and then, having given it to Christ, give it to Christ's people. The Lord bless these words of mine for Jesus' sake. Amen.



# **641 CONFESSION OF SIN ILLUSTRATED –**

## **Ps. 32:5**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 23rd, 1865,**  
**by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” — Psalm 32:5**

DAVID’S GRIEF for sin was long and terrible; its effects were visible upon his outward frame; “His bones waxed old.” “His moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” No remedy could he find until he made a full confession before the throne of heavenly grace. He tells us, that for a time he kept silent, and then his heart became more and more filled with grief—like some mountain lake whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He dreaded to confront his sin. He fashioned excuses; he endeavored to divert his thoughts by giving his mind to the cares of his kingdom or the pleasures of his court, but it was all to no purpose; the rankling arrow made the wound bleed anew, and made the gash more wide and deep every day. Like a festering sore, his anguish gathered and increased, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirits became more and more full of torment, and there was no rest in his bones because of sin. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or he must die outright; so he hastened to the mercy seat, and

there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the eyes of the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the 51st and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.

See, dear friends, the value of a truthful grace-worked confession of sin; it is to be prized above all price, for he who confesses his sin and forsakes it, shall find mercy. Now, it is a well-known fact that when God is pleased to bestow upon men any choice gift, Satan, who is the god of counterfeits, is sure to very soon produce a base imitation, true in appearance, but worthless in reality—his object is deception, and full often he succeeds. How many there are who have made a worthless confession, and yet are relying upon it as though it were a work of divine grace; they have come before God as a matter of form, and have said, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.” And having done so, they imagine that they have received divine absolution, when alas, alas, it is easy to be deceived, and difficult to cultivate within one’s heart that genuine repentance which is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

May God grant us His gracious assistance while we describe two widely different sorts of confession which have been very vividly brought before us during the past week, and then, we will have a few words upon the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy which is vested in God, who gives forgiveness to those whose confession is sincere.

**I.** Let me set before you **TWO SORTS OF CONFESSIONS.** At this present moment, unhappily, two persons are lying under sentence of death for murders of the most atrocious character. Without wishing to say a single word with regard to the state

of the soul of either of these persons—for into that it is no business of mine to pry—it seems to me that the published reports of their cases may very properly furnish us with *types* of two sorts of persons. It is remarkable that two such cases as those of Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent should be before the public eye at the same moment and that the points of contrast in their confessions should be so exceedingly clear. I cannot but hope and pray that we may gather some few lessons of warning from crimes which have, no doubt, exercised a great influence for evil upon the masses of our country.

The confession which has been made by Dr. PRITCHARD may be taken as a specimen of those which are full often made by impenitent sinners, and which can never be regarded as acceptable before the throne of the Most High. Here is a man who is accused of the atrocious crime of murdering his wife and his mother-in-law, and when he answers to the indictment, we are not astonished to hear him plead, “*Not Guilty!*” I am far from being severe upon him for so pleading, but viewing him as a *type*, I would remind you that thousands of those who call themselves “miserable sinners” in our public services, if they were called to plead before the bar of God, would have the effrontery to say, “Not Guilty.” They might not use the exact words, very probably they would use terms having the opposite meaning, but their *heart-plea* would be, “*Not guilty.*” If they had the law of God explained to them, and they were questioned upon each commandment—“Have you broken this? Have you broken that?”—though ready enough to confess in the gross that they have sinned, when it came to details, they would be for denying all.

We have heard of a woman who readily allowed that she was a sinner. “O yes, sir, we are all sinners; just so, sir.” But when the visitor sat down and opened the Bible, and pointing to the commandment, said, “Have you ever had any other God

save the Lord?”—she did not know that she ever had. “Had she ever taken God’s name in vain?” “O dear no, sir, I never did anything so wicked.” Each precept was explained, and she very positively claimed that she had not broken it. She had not violated the Sabbath; she had not killed anybody; she had not committed adultery; she had not borne false witness, or coveted anything. She was altogether, in every detail, innocent—though on the whole, she was quite willing to say as other people, “Oh, yes! I am a sinner! Of course, sir, we are all sinners!” which, being interpreted, means, “I am ready to say anything you may like to put into my mouth, but I do not believe a syllable of it.” The inward speech of the unconverted man is, “I am not guilty.” Ask the unhumiliated transgressor, “Are you worthy of God’s wrath?” and his proud heart replies, “I am not.” “Are you worthy to be cast away forever from God’s presence on account of sin?” and the unbroken, uncontrite soul replies, “I am not; I am no thief, nor adulterer, nor extortioner; I have not sinned as yonder publican has done. I thank God that I am not as other men are.” Man pleads, “Not Guilty,” and yet all the while within his heart, so proud and boastful, there may readily be discerned abundant evidence of abounding sin. The leprosy is white upon his unclean brow, and yet the man claims to be sound and whole. If there were no other evidence against us, the very pride which boasts of innocence would be sufficient to convict us of sin, and will be so when we are taught right reason by the Holy Spirit.

The guilty man whose case we are now looking upon as an illustration, *endeavored, as a means of defense for himself, to involve another in the dreadful guilt and punishment of his atrocious sin.* There were very distinct signs that he would have been perfectly satisfied if the woman who had ministered to his sinful pleasures had been accused and condemned of the crime for which he alone was guilty. Certainly this is the case with the

great mass of those who are compelled to acknowledge their sins. Our first parent could not deny that he had taken of the forbidden fruit, but he laid the blame upon Eve—"The woman whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Ah Adam! Where is your manliness? Where is your love to your spouse, that you would involve in the ruin her who was bone of your bone so as to escape yourself? And she! She will not take the blame for a moment, but it is the serpent; she casts all the sin on him. In this first case of sin, the attempt was less atrocious than in that of the prisoner before us, because there was real guilt both in the woman and in the serpent, while it does not appear that the servant girl in Pritchard's family had any share in the poisoning. However, the human heart is such, that, if we could really throw all the shame and blame of sin upon another who was perfectly innocent; there would be a strong temptation to do so, if we might by such means be considered innocent. No, let me show that Adam virtually did that, for he said, "The woman whom *You* gave me," thus virtually laying the blame of his rebellious deed upon God Himself! And God, what hand had He in Adam's eating of the fruit of the accursed tree? It was an act of Adam's free will—he did as he pleased concerning it, and the Most Holy God could in no sense be made partaker of his transgression. Yet, think of it! He would sooner that the great God, who is hymned of angels as the thrice Holy One, should bear the fault of his iniquity than he would bear it himself!

Such are we naturally. We may bend the knee, and say we are miserable sinners, but unless the grace of God has taught us to make a true confession, we are always for shifting the burden to some other shoulder, and making it out that, after all, though nominally miserable sinners, we are not so bad as a great many other people, and have a deal saddled upon us which really is no fault of ours, but belongs to providence, to

fate, to our fellow men, to the devil, to the weather, and I know not what besides!

The convicted criminal who stands before us in our picture *made no confession whatever until the case was proved and sentence pronounced.* The case was clear enough, but he did his best to make it difficult; had he been completely free from the crime, his bearing and tone could have been scarcely more confident when asserting his innocence. I admit that it was very natural that he should not aid to convict himself. It is because it is so natural that the man serves so admirably as a representative of human nature when it makes its impenitent confessions. When it could not avail the wretch to withhold the truth, when facts were brought out so clearly, when the jury had decided, when the judge had pronounced sentence, then, and not till then, he yielded to tears and entreaties, and proffered a confession, such as it was. So is it always with unregenerate humanity; though cognizant of sin, we only acknowledge before the Lord that which is too glaring to be denied. Sin may be held up before the eyes of the man who is guilty of it, and often he will disown his own offspring or assert that it is not what God's Word declares it to be. Holy Scripture accuses us of a thousand sins which we practically claim to be innocent of, for we flatter ourselves that the Bible puts too harsh a construction upon our actions, and that we are not what it declares us to be. When our fellow men concur in censuring our fault, we are compelled to blush, but of what value is a repentance which owes its existence to the overwhelming testimony of our fellow offenders against us? This force-work is far removed from the free and ready acknowledgments of a man whose heart is touched by divine grace, and melted by the love of Jesus. When men are upon their dying beds, when the ghosts of their iniquities haunt them, when the red hand of guilt draws the curtain, when they can almost hear the sentence of the Last

Judgment, *then* they will make a confession—but may we not fear that it is of little value since it is wrung and extorted from them by fear of hell, and horror of the wrath to come? True repentance worked in us by the Holy Spirit, drops as freely as honey drops from the comb, but merely natural confessions are like the worst of the wine squeezed by force from the dregs. O dear friends, God deliver you from ungracious confessions of sin, and enable you to sincerely repent at the foot of Jesus' cross!

When the confession came in the case before us, it was *very partial*. He had killed one, but he professed himself guiltless of the other's death. Villain as he was, on his own showing he could go the length of admitting half his crime, but then he started back and acted the liar. No, she died by accident, and he, to avoid being charged unjustly—innocent creature as he was—had put the poison in the bottle afterwards. He had the wickedness to fake wonderment that his tale was not believed, and likened those who doubted him to those who would not believe the Lord of Glory. Now, the confessions of unregenerate men are precisely of this sort. They will go the length of acknowledging, if they have been drinking, or if they have broken the laws of the state, "Yes, we have offended here." But the great mass of sins against God are not confessed, nor allowed to be sins at all. Men will often lay a stress upon sins of which they are not conspicuously guilty, and omit those which are the most glaring. What unrenewed man thinks it a sin to forget God, to forsake the Creator's fountain of living waters for the cisterns of the creature, or to live without God in the world? And yet, these are the most crying of all iniquities. To rob God of His glory, to despise His Son, to disbelieve the gospel, to live for self, to be self-righteous—all these are heinous evils, but what carnal man admits as much? Covetousness! Again, whoever confesses that? Thousands are guilty of it, but few will admit it, even in private before the Lord.

No confession will be acceptable before God unless you are willing to make a clean breast of the whole of your evil ways, words, and thoughts, before the Searcher of Hearts! I do not wonder if you should fail to tell others your offenses; it were not meet you should do so except when you have offended them, and may make retribution by the confession; but before God, you must open all, you must roll away the stone from the mouth of that sepulcher even though your iniquity, like Lazarus, should stink. There must be no mincing the matter, things must be called by their right names; you must be willing to feel the horrible sinfulness of sin, and as far as you can, you must descend to the very bottom of its terrible guiltiness, and acknowledge its blackness, its heinousness, its devilry, its abomination. No confession will be acceptable before God if you knowingly and willfully gloss over any sin; if you make any exceptions, or are partial with respect to any form of iniquity; that confession which hides some sins, and only confesses certain others, stops one leak in the soul, and opens another.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that *when the criminal had confessed his sin, yet still in the last confession*— which we may suppose to have been true, *there are words of extenuation and nothing to indicate any deep and suitable sensibility of his great transgression.* He hints at reasons why he was scarcely accountable— a sort of madness and the influence of strong drink must be blamed for the crime, and not the man himself. O God, You know how often in our natural confessions, before Your grace met with us, we made wretched and mean excuses for ourselves! We said that a strong temptation overcame us; it was an unguarded moment; it was our constitution and our besetting sins; it was our friend who led us astray; it was God's providence which tried us; it was anything rather than ourselves—we were to blame, no doubt, but still there were extenuating circumstances. Beloved friends! A man can never make a true confession till



he feels that sin is his own sin, and is willing to confess it as such; he must cease to apologize, and must just stand forth before the Lord, and cry, “I have sinned willfully and infamously, and here, standing in Your presence, I acknowledge it—and if a word of apology could save my soul, I dare not utter it, for I should again be guilty of a lie.” May this teach us to seek out rather the aggravations of our sin than fancied extenuations of it. Try to see the worst of your case, sinner, rather than to gloss it or gild it over and make it seem better than it is.

All this, remember, was committed by this miserable murderer, who is soon to appear before his God, not through ignorance, *but in spite of a clear consciousness of the wrong of his deed.* Had he been some person of a low mental organization, or of neglected intellect, there might be some plea. If, for instance, he had never been able to read, and had received his only education amid thieves and vagabonds, there might have been some excuse, and we might have said, “It is the sin of the community which fails to provide moral and religious instruction for the people.” But here is a man who knows better, who, I suppose, had listened to thousands of sermons, had a knowledge of the Bible, had pretended to pray, was well taught as to the matter of right and wrong. And yet still, in defiance of all this, he sins, and to make matters worse, he shows no signs of softening of heart, no tenderness, no melting, nothing of deep regret, shame, contrition, or humbleness of heart, but is, apparently (I say no more) as stubborn in confessing his guilt as when he was denying it. Ah, but there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know this, that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts, if they do not spring from really contrite spirits shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most

High. Let these suffice as remarks upon an unacceptable confession. Oh Lord, let Your Holy Spirit give to the guilty one, of whom we have been speaking, and to us all, that broken and contrite heart which You will accept through Jesus Christ!

The second case must now come before us, and here again I do not desire to speak anything about the state of the heart of CONSTANCE KENT. I only speak of her outward act, and only of that as a symbol of true confession. Here is one avowedly guilty of a most atrocious murder, a very great and terrible crime; but when she appears in court she is brought there upon her own confession; her life was in no danger from the witness of other people. She surrendered herself voluntarily, and when she stood before the judge, *she pleaded guilty*. No doubt her anxious friends had suggested to her the desirableness of pleading, “Not guilty,” hoping to save her life by failure in the evidence, or plea of insanity, or some other legal method of saving criminals from the gallows. Mark, however, how distinctly she says, “Guilty.” And though the question is repeated and time is given her to retract, her reply is still the one self-condemning word, “GUILTY!” Even so before the Lord, whenever we come to confess, we must approach Him with this cry, “*Guilty. Guilty!* Lord, I cannot say anything else. If hell is my eternal portion for it, I dare say no other. The stones in the streets would cry out against me if I denied my guilt. When my memory shows me the record of my days, its truthful witness is that I have broken Your law; and when my conscience looks at the way in which I have transgressed, it cannot say anything but this, ‘You have willfully broken God’s law, and you deserve His wrath.’” Now sinner, you shall never be at peace with God until you are unreservedly willing to plead, “Guilty.” That self-righteous spirit of yours must be cast out as though it were the very devil, for it is next akin to the devil, and is quite as evil, and you must be brought down humbly to lie at

the foot of Jehovah's throne and confess that you do richly deserve His wrath. You have defied His righteous law, and sinned against Him with a high hand. You must plead, "Guilty," or remain guilty forever! You shall never find pardon through Jesus Christ till you are willing, truly and really, to admit yourself a sinner.

Constance Kent was *anxious to free all others from the blame of her sin*. Her counsel says, in open court, "Solemnly, in the presence of Almighty God, as a person who values her own soul, she wishes me to say that the guilt is her own alone; and that her father and others who have so long suffered most unjust and cruel suspicions, are wholly and absolutely innocent." This is well spoken. I know nothing of this young woman's heart, but using her as an illustration rather than an example, we are safe in saying that it is a very blessed sign of true repentance when the sinner cries out with David, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done *this* evil in Your sight." There will be, in a gracious penitent, no attempt to lay the blame upon the tempter, or upon providence; no dwelling upon circumstances, the suddenness of the temptation, or the hastiness of one's temper. "Oh God," says the sinner, "I *myself* have sinned; I have nothing in the world that is so my own as my own sin. For this my sin, I alone am accountable, and I feel it, and I cannot, I dare not accuse anyone else with being guilty of *my* sin. I must stand in my own place before You, O God, even if that involves my eternal ruin." It will never do for you to lay the blame on your mothers and fathers because they did not teach you better, upon the minister for not being earnest enough, or upon your employer for telling you to do wrong. It is true that we may be partakers of your sins in a measure, but if you are sincerely penitent, the guilt which will strike you will not be another man's guilt, or another man's share in your sin,

but your own guilt. A sinner has not been brought truly before the Lord in humble contrition unless his cry is, “Lord! *I have sinned. I have sinned so as to be guilty myself, in my own person. Have mercy upon me!*”

The unhappy young woman now condemned to die *needed no witness to come forward to prove her guilt* and assure her conviction. No one saw the deed; it was done so secretly that the most expert detectives were not able to find a satisfactory clue to the mystery. There may be collateral evidence to support her confession; it may, or it may not be true that her conviction would now have been certain had her confession been retracted; but she did not need that, for without any voice of man to witness, she witnessed against herself. It will never suffice for us merely to confess to the Lord what other people have seen, and to feel guilty because we know that the case is reported in the neighborhood. Many people who have fallen into sin, have felt very penitent because they knew they would damage their names, or lose their employment; but to have your private sin brought before you by conscience, and voluntarily, without any pressure but the burden of sin itself and the work of the Holy Spirit, to come before God and say, “Lord, You know in this matter I have offended, and though none saw me except Your eyes and mine; yet Your eyes might well flash with anger at me, while mine shall be wet with many a tear of penitence on account of it”—that is what you need. Sinner, you must come before God now and let out your heart without any external pressure. Spontaneously must your soul flow out, poured out like water before the Lord, or you must not hope that He will pardon you.

*She confessed all.* It was a solemn moment when the judge said, “I must repeat to you, that you are charged with having willfully, intentionally, and with malice killed and murdered your brother. Are you guilty or not guilty?” Yes, she was guilty,

just as the judge had put it. She did not object to those words which made the case come out so black. The willfulness?—yes, she acknowledged that. The intention, the malice?—yes, all that. The killing, the murdering—was it just murder?—was it nothing less? No, nothing else. Not a word of extenuation. She acknowledges all, just as the judge puts it. She is guilty in very deed of the whole charge. Sinner, will you confess sin as God puts it? Many will confess sin after their own fashion, but will you confess it as *God* puts it? Are you brought to see sin as God sees it? As far as mortal eye could bear that dreadful sight, and do you confess now just what God lays at your door—that you have been His enemy, a traitor, full of evil, covered with iniquity? Will you confess that you have crucified His dear Son, and have in all ways deserved His hottest wrath and displeasure—will you plead guilty to that? If not, you shall have no pardon; but if you will do this, He is merciful and just to forgive you your sins through Jesus the great atoning sacrifice.

*She had not*, nor had her counsel for her, *a single word to say by way of excuse*; in fact, at her request, one supposed excuse was utterly discarded—“She wishes me to say that she was not driven to this act, as has been asserted, by unkind treatment at home, as she met with nothing there but tender and forbearing love.” Her counsel might have said she was very young—it was hoped that her youth might plead for her. Being young, she might be readily led astray by an evil passion—might not that excuse her? It was long ago, and her confession was her own; she had brought herself there into that dock—might not this be a reason for mercy? Nothing of the kind; the judge might think so if he pleased, but there was nothing said for her about that, nor did she desire that it should be suggested. She might secretly hope, but her confession was so thorough, that there was not a single word to sully its clear stream. So, sinner, if you come before God, you must not say, “Lord, I am to be excused

because of my position—I was in poverty, and I was tempted to steal.” Or, “I had been in bad company, and so I learned to blaspheme.” Or, “I had a hard employer, and so I was driven to sin to find some pleasure there.” No; if you are really penitent, you will find no reason whatever why you should have sinned, except the evil of your own heart—and that you will plead as an aggravation, not as an excuse. “Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! I am, O God, before Your face, guilty; I offer no excuse, no extenuation. You must deal with me upon pure mercy, if You do save me, for justice can only award me my well-deserved doom.”

Notice that when she was asked whether she had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon her, there was still a solemn silence. Was there no reason to be given why the dreadful sentence of being hanged by the neck until dead should not be passed upon a young and weeping girl? She did not so much as hint at one. I remember well the time when I thought there was no reason why the flames of hell should not consume me, and why the crushing weight of God’s wrath should not roll over me forever and forever. I think every sinner who has really come to Christ, has been made to feel that however angry God may be with sin, He is not one whit too angry. Until we know the power of divine grace, we read in the Bible concerning eternal punishment, and we think it is too heavy and too hard, and we are apt to kick against it, and look for some heretic or other who will teach us another doctrine. But when the soul is really quickened by divine grace, and made to feel the weight of sin, it thinks the bottomless pit none too deep, and the punishment of hell none too severe for sin such as it has committed. This is not the emotion of a mind rendered morbid by sickness, but these are the genuine workings of God the Holy Spirit in the soul, bringing the man to stand guilty before the Lord, with his mouth closed, not able to say a word

against the sentence of divine justice. May God bring such there who have never been there yet!

In the confession, as we read the story, there was *much tenderness*. I do not wonder that the judge exhibited deep emotion—who could help it? Remember, I am not pretending to know her heart, I am only judging the externals; as far as externals went there seemed to be a great brokenness of spirit. She appeared really to know what guilt meant, and to stand there with this resolve upon her soul, that though she could not make any atonement for her crime, she would acknowledge it honestly, and accordingly she confessed it as one who felt within her own soul the terrible weight of her guilt. This is the manner in which we must stand before God if we would find mercy. It is all very well for us to use fine language, but words alone are worthless. Those words which come fresh from your lips, dictated by your own heart, because the Holy Spirit is there, will suffice if the heart is in them. It is to the contrite that the promise is given. Look to Jesus for contrition, for without it, there is no pardon. **II.** Thus we have tried, as far as we could, to bring out the distinctions which pertain to confessions, and now let us have a word or two upon **THE EXERCISE OF THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY ON GOD'S PART.**

“You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” In every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given. There is a notion abroad that confession deserves mercy. We read in the papers such remarks as these, “expiating sin by confession,” or, “made such atonement as he could by confessing his sin.” Confession makes no atonement in any shape whatever. There is not one single word in that law which I read to you this morning, in the 20th of Exodus, about the possibility of taking away sin by mere confession. Justice has but one rule, and that is, *sin must be punished*. If the sinner violates law, law, in the case of man, may excuse the penalty, but in the

case of God, *never*. The attributes of God are not like the qualities of man, they never come into collision with one another, nor do they abridge the sphere of each other. The justice of God is as awful and all-reaching as if He had not a grain of mercy, while the mercy of God is as unrestrained and almighty as if He were utterly unjust. The reason why sin can be forgiven in the case of a penitent sinner is because for that sinner, Jesus Christ has borne the full weight of all the wrath which his sin deserves. The fire cloud of Jehovah's wrath was waiting for the sinner—the sinner must receive the whole of its dread discharge; but for every sinner who repents and believes in Him, Christ stood beneath that terrible cloud, and all the lightning was discharged on *Him*. Christ suffered as incarnate God, all the chastisement which was due to His people. The grief of our Savior we can never tell—the woes of Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha are not to be expressed, but they were accepted by God in the place of all the suffering and grief which the law most righteously claimed on every law-breaker. And now, through what Christ Jesus has done, the eternal mercy of God comes streaming forth in perfect consistency with justice. Mercy provided the great substitute, and now mercy, with loving heart, calls upon repenting and believing sinners, and assures them that all sin is put away through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Let every sinner know, then, that although his repentance does not deserve mercy, the God of love has been pleased to promise free pardon to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ deserves it! Pardon is given to penitent sinners as a matter of justice, as well as mercy, because of the throes and grief, and agonies of the divine Redeemer.

How consistent it is with the nature of things that penitent sinners and penitent sinners only, should obtain mercy through Jesus Christ! When you read the story of the man who made



no confession till it was forced out of him, although you can respond to his wish, “Fellow creatures, pray for me,” you cannot feel much sympathy, if any, with him. His conduct seems to harden one’s heart against him, not merely because of his guilt, but because of the lie of his confession. But, when you read the other story— although it contains no request to pray, you find you do not need one, for your heart cries at once— “Father, forgive her!” And you think within yourself, “If the prerogative of mercy can be exercised in this case, let it be.” If it were put to a show of hands of all our country whether the law should be executed on Constance Kent, I think we would all say, “Let the penitent sinner live.” Great was her offense, and no excuse is to be offered for her, as she offers none for herself. It was a great and dreadful crime which must be a blight upon her all her days, yet, let her be spared, for she has confessed most fully— not on the ground of justice, but on the ground that this seems to be a case in which, if the prerogative of mercy is to be sovereignly exercised at all, it should now have free scope. I think when the eternal God sees a poor sinner standing before Himself, and hears him cry, “I am guilty, Lord! I am guilty through and through! I alone am guilty! I have broken Your law! If You destroy me, You are just! My heart is broken because I have sinned. I cannot be more wretched than I am now, for sin is my plague and my misery; and while I confess it, I do not think that my confession has any merit in it. Save me for Jesus’ sake!” “Why, I think,” the mighty God says, “I have brought that soul, through My grace, into a state in which it is ready to receive the precious gift of justification and pardon through the blood of My dear Son.”

See how one grace gives a fitness for another. The sinner is brought to Jesus, his heart is broken, and then, it is ready to be bound up. The penitent sinner has paid honor to the prerogative of the law-giver; he has, as far as he could do so,

dethroned the law-giver by his sin—but now, by his confession—he restores Him to His throne. Such a sinner knows the bitterness of sin, and knowing its bitterness, he will hate it for the future. If he is pardoned, he will not go back as the dog to his vomit, or the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. This pardoned sinner will not take to himself the credit of having been pardoned by his confessions. He will not go abroad and talk lightly of his sin, he will be sure to speak much of the leniency of the law-giver, and the power of Jesus' precious blood; he will admire forevermore, even in eternity, the mighty grace which pardoned such as he is. On the other hand, if man were forgiven, and no true penitence worked in him, what would be the result? Why, it would be turning wolves loose upon society! I think if God gave forgiveness to men without working a work of divine grace in them by which they are brought to repentance, it would be offering a premium for sin, it would be breaking down the floodgates which restrain vice, it would be destroying all the excellent fruits which free grace is intended to produce. What? Is the man to be pardoned for all the past, and to remain without repentance for his evil ways? Then will he make the future just as the past has been—no, he will sin with a higher hand, and with a stronger arm—because he sees with what impunity he may rebel! What? Shall a proud, unhumbled sinner rejoice in the forgiving love of the Father? Then will he arrogantly boast that there was not much evil in his sin after all; he will be no singer to the praise of sovereign grace, but rather, with the boastful lips of the legalist, he will render unto himself praise for the dexterous manner in which he has escaped from the condemnation due to sin. God will give pardon to those only to whom He gives repentance—for it were unsafe to give it elsewhere. God brings us down and lays us in the dust, for

then, and only then are we prepared to hear Him say, “Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.”

I take it for granted, that there are some here who will say, “I wish I could repent. I know that it would not merit eternal life. I understand that faith—faith in Jesus Christ is the way by which I must be saved, but I desire to be humbled on account of sin.” My dear friend, your desire to be humbled may perhaps be an indication that you are already in that condition; but, if you are lamenting your hardness of heart, I will suggest two or three things. Remember *your past sins*. I do not want you to write out a list of them, there is not paper enough in this world for that, but let some of them stand out before your memory, and if they do not make you blush, they ought to do so. Next, think over all *the aggravations of those sins*. Recollect the training you had as a child. You were blessed with godly parents. Remember the providential warnings you received. Think of the light and knowledge against which you have offended; that tenderness of conscience against which you kicked. Then I beg you to consider *against what a God you have offended*—so great, so good, so kind, who has never done you a displeasure, but has been all generosity and kindness to you till this day. Your offenses have been insults against the King of heaven. Your transgressions have been undermining, as far as they could, the throne of the Eternal Majesty.

Look at sin in the light of God, to be humbled. And if this will not do it, let me pray that God the Holy Spirit may take you to *the foot of the cross*. Remember, that in order that sin might be put away, it was necessary that God should be veiled in human flesh. No one else could bear the load of sin but God, and He only could bear it by becoming Man. See the suffering of the Savior when “despised and rejected.” Mark the spitting, the shame, the smiting. Look at His wounds—

“Count the purple drops, and say,  
“Thus must sin be washed away.”

And surely, if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, such a meditation will make you see the blackness and vileness of sin. John Bradford said that when he was in prayer, he never liked to rise from his knees till he began to feel something of brokenness of heart. Get up to your chamber, then, poor sinner, if you desire to have a broken and contrite spirit, and come not out until you have it! Remember that you will never feel so broken in heart as when you can see Jesus bearing all your sins. *Faith and repentance* are born together, and aid the health of each other—

“Law and terrors do but harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,  
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”

Go as you are to Christ, and ask Him to give that tenderness of heart which shall be to you the indication that pardon has come; for pardon cannot and will not come unattended by a melting of soul and a hatred of sin. Wrestle with the Lord! Say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Get a fast hold upon the Savior by a vigorous faith in His great atonement. Oh, may His Spirit enable you to do this! Say in your soul, “Here I will abide, at the horns of the altar; if I perish I will perish at the foot of the cross. From my hope in Jesus, I will not depart, but I will look up and say, ‘Savior, Your heart was broken for me, break my heart! You were wounded, wound me! Your blood was freely poured forth for me, Lord, let me pour forth my tears that I should have nailed You to the tree.

O Lord, dissolve my soul; melt it in tenderness, and You shall be forever praised for making Your enemy Your friend.”

May God bless you, and make you truly repent if you have not repented; and if you have, may He enable you to continue in it all your days, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## **642 WITHHOLDING CORN – PROV. 11:26**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 30th, 1865,**

**by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“He who withholds corn, the people shall curse him, but blessing shall be upon the head of him who sells it.” —  
Proverbs 11:26**

IF I DARED, I would always preach upon the comfortable promises and gracious doctrines of God’s Word; I find it most delightful and easy work to expatiate upon those themes of revelation which abound in sweetness, and are full of savor and preciousness to the child of God. I said, *“If I dared,”* and you will ask me why I dare not? The answer is because I have a solemn conviction on my mind that if I would be clear of the blood of all men, I must strive to make my range of ministry as wide as the range of revelation, and I must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. I feel bound to go not where my wishes would lead me, but where Holy Scripture has made a track for my feet. There are certain texts in the Scriptures which are very seldom preached upon, because it is thought that there is little gospel in them, and that the people, when they go home, will say to one another, “Well, I wasn’t fed this morning.” Those who aim at pleasing men may well be shy of such subjects; but I hold that since God, in His wisdom has placed these passages in the Bible, He intends His servants, the preachers of the word, to expound them. We are, it strikes me,

not to preach from *selections* of Scripture only, but from the *whole* of the sacred volume, for, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be *complete*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

I freely confess that I do not know why I have selected this text this morning, except that it haunted and hunted me until I could not refrain from preaching upon it. It seemed to force itself upon me, and to bore its way into my soul like a rifle shot; I thought it over and over, and could not make much of it until I yielded up myself to it, saying within myself, “If the Lord has anything to say to the people out of my mouth, here it is—let Him use it.” If there should be any persons among our country friends, or our corn-dealing townsmen, who this morning, feel at all touched by the text, I cannot help it. Here is my Master’s message to them, and I can only deliver it with the best intentions, hoping that those to whom it comes home may be profited by it. It will, however, soon be clear to you that the verse before us has, besides its first meaning, a weight of very important spiritual teaching in it, to which we shall all do well to take heed.

The text, as it stands, has to do, as you clearly see, with owners of corn and dealers in it. In Solomon’s days there were very frequent famines. Communication between one nation and another was so extremely difficult that the transportation of grain in any large quantities was not attempted; therefore, if a failure in the crops occurred in one district, the scarcity in that neighborhood was not compensated by abundance in another, and terrible famines prevailed. Certain persons in those days not only stored up all the corn which grew in their own fields, but purchased as much as they could of others, so as to raise the market above its natural level; this, under the circumstances, was a very high affront put upon God, for instead of bearing

their part in His judgments, these men enriched themselves by the poverty of their starving neighbors. There have been such people ever since Solomon's day, and although the present system of free trade has nearly put an end to that kind of thing, there are doubtless some who would again withhold their corn, even at famine prices, if they could rise the price still higher. How does Scripture deal with this peculiar form of greed in trade?

I cannot but admire the wonderful reserve of Holy Scripture, for as Mr. Arnot well observes, "In this brief maxim no arbitrary rule is laid down to the possessor of corn, that he must sell at a certain period and at a certain price—and yet the hungry are not left without a protecting law. The protection of the weak is entrusted not to small police regulations, but to great self-acting providential arrangements. The double fact is recorded in terms of peculiar distinctness, that he who in times of scarcity keeps up his corn in order to enrich himself is loathed by the people and he who sells it freely is loved. This is all. There is no further legislation on the subject." Our narrow wisdom might have wished for some definite law upon the subject, something like a sliding scale, but the great ruler of heaven and earth falls into no such error. Laws which interfere between buyer and seller, master and workman, by any form of law, are blunders and nuisances. Parliaments and princes have hung on to the antiquated absurdity of regulating prices, but the Holy Spirit does nothing of the kind. All the attempts of men, to control the price of bread and wheat, are sheer folly, as the history of France may well prove. The market goes best when it is left alone, and so in our text, there is no law enacted and no penalty threatened except that which the nature of things makes inevitable. God knows political economy, whether men do or not, and leaving the coarse machinery of police regulations, He puts the offender under a form of self-



acting legislature which is far more efficient. The text seems to say, “Well, if you have no love to your neighbor and choose to keep your wheat, I make no law to break open your granary or pull down your stacks, but you will most certainly gain the hatred, contempt, and curse of the people among whom you dwell.”

You see, dear friends, that the man may do as he pleases about selling or not, but he cannot escape from the curse of the people, if he chooses to lock up his grain; and on the other hand, if he will sell at a proper price, or, as another translation reads it, break his bread, that is to say, give it to the starving if they cannot buy it, he will receive blessings not only from the people, but from heaven itself.

Brethren, it is a matter of fact that any man of any observation must have seen, that there is no transaction which ever brings such ill-will upon a man, such general condemnation, especially from the poor, as withholding the corn. Common consent condemns the hoarder, and human nature revolts at his offense; ask anyone you choose to meet, except he is himself deep in the same mire, and he will join you in crying out against it. Of course, there are many ways of defending the deed, but there is no way of escaping the fact that the people curse the doer of it in their hearts. “Well,” says one, “it is my own corn, I may do as I like with it.” Just so, nobody said you could not; nobody disputed your rights—only you are warned that in hoarding it, you are sure to get the people’s curse! You cannot alter that; it will follow and hang about your heels, and as far as the fact is known, it will make men curl the lip at you, and sneer if they are your equals, while the working men, deep in their hearts will abhor you. No matter how kind you may be to the poor in other matters, nor how you may have given your money in other ways, your holding the corn will be a scorn among your enemies, and an offense

to your best friends. It is not always an ill sign when the voice of the people is against a man, but in this case, Scripture endorses it, and he who dares to run the risk is none too wise.

“Ah,” says another, “I do not see the wrong of withholding. There are laws of supply and demand, and the preacher does not understand political economy.” The preacher, however, thinks he does understand it, and even if he does not, a *child* can comprehend the text before him, and with what we have to deal just now. Solomon here tells you that if you like to carry out political economy in the withholding way, you will get cursed for it, and depend upon it, YOU WILL! Facts are stubborn things, and this is one that withholding corn earns me the curse of the people, and that is what no Christian should wish to bear. “But what business is that of the preacher’s?” He answers that he thanks God that he has no share in it whatever, but he is set in his place to rebuke what God rebukes, and he is doing no more than expounding God’s own Word upon the matter. Whether you hear or do not, there is the truth of God, and may the Lord bless it to you. “Well, we ought not to hear such things on Sundays.” What? Not read our Bibles on Sundays—not explain the meaning of a text on Sundays? You would not have heard me on a Monday, some of you, and therefore you have it today! Do not be angry with the text, but look at it and read it—and then afterwards choose as you will. “He who withholds corn,” God says, “the people shall curse him.” And if you wish to have ill-will, and the bad word of thousands of poor cottagers and all others who have human sympathies, then withhold your corn. Thank God, the worst monopolizer cannot do much mischief nowadays, for, by the gracious providence of God, which has burst the fetters of commerce, we are not likely to feel any very great shortage of bread in this country. Should our own crops fail, the harvests of other lands supply the masses with their food. The crime is

growing scarcer and scarcer; but, if any cases still survive, and men choose to follow so ruinous a course, they will get cursed for it in mutterings deep, if silent, and in sneers as bitter as they are well-deserved.

By your leave I shall now take a step above my text, using it as a ladder to mount to a yet higher truth of God. *If it brings a curse upon a man to withhold the bread which perishes, what a weight of curse will light upon that man who withholds the bread of eternal life!* If the people shall curse the man who keeps back the bread which merely sustains the body, what shall be the withering denunciations which shall overwhelm the soul of him who deals deceitfully with the bread of eternal life? That seems to me to be a fair deduction from the text, and at that truth we will aim this morning. First, *I shall attempt to show the ways in which the bread of life may be withheld from the people, and the curse which will follow;* secondly, *I shall try to depict the blessedness of the man who “breaks it,” as another translation has it, to the people.* And then, thirdly, *we shall conclude by opening our own granaries and breaking some of this bread among the assembled multitude.*

I. First, he who withholds the bread of life will surely get the people's curse upon him. **HOW CAN THIS BE DONE?**

1. It may be readily accomplished by *locking up the Word of God in an unknown language, or by delivering and preaching it in such a style, that the people shall not comprehend it.* The Romish Church for many years kept the sacred Scriptures in an unknown tongue, and resisted all attempts to translate the book of God into the common language of the people. What a curse Rome has had resting on her head! To those who know the enormity of this wickedness, in holding back the word of life, it is scarcely possible to think of Rome without invoking judgment upon her. What myriads of souls went down to the pit of hell, perishing through lack of knowledge during what were called the Dark Ages; what fearful imprecations they must be uttering even

now upon Popes and cardinals and priests who had the key of the kingdom, but would neither enter themselves, nor allow others to enter there; they had the light, but they concealed it in a dark lantern, and the nations were compelled to sit in the darkness of profound ignorance and superstition, because they would not give them the light. Surely the people shall curse such forever! But are these the only offenders? Is not their crime prolonged by those ministers who aim at delivering themselves in an oratorical style, with flowers of rhetoric far too fine to be reached by the common people? We have heard of some, and we fear we know some who would rather round a period than win a soul; to them it is their first and last objective to deliver refined thoughts in elegant and elaborate language, and having so done, having soared aloft on the spread-eagle's wing far out of sight, they are content to have dazzled the many and displayed themselves. Truly such men withhold the corn!

What can the poor countrymen, and servants, who are sitting in the aisles, make out of their eloquence? What can the workers who come in to hear something that may do them good, make out of their outlandish big talk? The terms of theology, the phrases of art, the definitions of philosophy, the jargon of science, are all unknown tongues to the young godly farmer or praying shopkeepers. "Alas!" he says, "this does not come to me—I cannot understand it." Possibly, in their ignorance, some people think the high-flyers very learned men, but in reality they are far from it, for plainness of speech is a better sign of learning than high-sounding words, and soaring sentences.

Oh, dear friends, when we preach the gospel plainly, I am sure we have our reward; when preaching in some village chapel, or from a wagon in a field, it is no small delight to watch the faces of the men in smock frocks, and the women in their

print gowns, as they catch or feel the force of an inspired truth of God! Plain speech wins their blessing; but to stand and talk right over the people's heads—what is it but having the corn, and keeping it from those who need it? Simplicity is the authorized style of true gospel ministry. “Having this ministry,” says the apostle, “we use great plainness of speech.” The common people heard the Master gladly, which they would not have done if He had spoken in high-flown language. Whitefield, the Prince of Preachers, was mainly so because of the market language which he used; let all of us, who have the bread of life, try to be very plain. You who write tracts, or preach in the streets, or you who teach children, break the large slices of truth into small pieces, and crack the shells of the hard nuts. Take away the crust for the babes, and pick out the stones from the fruit. Beware lest in seeking an excess of refinement, you withhold the corn and win the people's curses!

2. But secondly, we may fall into this sin by keeping back the most important and vital truths of revelation, and giving a prominence to other things which are but secondary. My brethren, if I were to stand in this pulpit, and for the next few months address you upon moral precepts, the excellence of virtue, or the faultiness of vice; if you could come out of this place and say, time after time, “We hear nothing about Jesus Christ; we do not know whether there is a Holy Spirit.” If I were gifted with ever so much ability, and if these were my themes, however earnestly I pressed them, I should be guilty of withholding the corn, the true food of souls. Morality brings no food to hungry souls, although it is a good thing in its place. Dissuasives from vice are *not* the bread of heaven, though well enough in their way. We need to have the great doctrines of grace brought forward, for the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and it is by preaching the truth of God as it is in Jesus, that souls are won to Him. I grieve to think how indistinct some

preachers are upon the doctrines of grace—they dare not say, “Election,” or if they do, they tremble directly, and guard their words with shields so huge, that the poor truth is crushed beneath them! As to final perseverance, effectual calling, particular redemption, or any of those grand truths of God where the fatness, and savor, and marrow of the gospel is to be found—you may listen to some of them from the beginning of January to the end of December, without hearing a word. This will not do; this is taking away the backbone from the spiritual man; it is tearing away the vitals of the gospel; it is giving to the people husks for wheat, and straw and chaff, instead of corn! Above all, that ministry is an abomination which puts Jesus Christ in the background. My brothers, we must not only hear something about Jesus Christ, but our preaching must be *mainly* about Him. He must be its head and feet—no, let me say, in some sense—He must be *all* that the preacher has to preach! Christ crucified must be the general summary of his ministry, and he must be able to say, when he retires from it, and is called up higher, “I have preached Christ. Of the things which I have spoken, this is the sum—I have preached my Master and what my Master gave me.”

O my brothers, what a guilty ministry is that in which the blood has no place—the ministry which denies or undervalues the atoning sacrifice of the great Redeemer! God have mercy upon us that we have not preached this fundamental truth of God as earnestly as we ought to have done! But by His grace we can still plead before Him, and say, we have truly desired to do it—

“Ever since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”

What is the use of any ministry of which that is not true? It is withholding corn, and in eternity the lost will curse their destroyer.

But we must not talk about ministers of whom there are not many here—we will come down to you. Many of you are Sunday school teachers—now you can sin in this way in the very same sense. Suppose as a Sunday school teacher, you are content with making the little ones read through the lesson, satisfied with filling up the hour or the hour-and-a-half, and feeling you have done a good deal in making the little fellows sit still and so on. Ah, my brethren, it is very solemn work. You have undertaken to teach these young immortals, and if you are satisfied with just making them go through the routine, take heed, lest when they grow up they come to curse you! I am afraid that many Sunday school addresses have no gospel in them! I do not see why the same gospel should not be preached to children as to grown-up people. I think it should. To stand up in a Sunday school and say, “Now, be good, boys and girls, and God will love you,” is telling lies! I know the teachers of our school feel the importance of delivering the truth of God as it is in Jesus to their children, and you therefore tell them, “You are lost and ruined, and your salvation is in Jesus Christ—look to Him and live!” The teacher whose general teaching is not full of Christ will be called to a sad account in the day when Christ shall come. Dear teachers of the school, whatever you do not know, do know your Lord—and whatever you cannot get into the youngsters’ heads, do make it a matter of prayer that you may get a knowledge of Christ and His atoning blood into their young *hearts* by the Holy Spirit. The same is also true of those of our beloved friends who conduct Bible classes, or who in any way teach the people. I do not know that I have any necessity to say this to the most of you here, but still I will say

it for the good of others—you must not, my brethren, get away from your great theme. It is of no use to go to the people empty-handed; we must take them bread—we only mock them by offering them stones, if we talk to them about the histories and precepts of Scripture, and forget the cross. Let our teaching be full of grace and truth—let us deliver our souls every doctrine as we find it in Scripture, and let us be determined that if men perish, it shall not be for lack of knowing the way of salvation.

3. We may withhold the bread of life, dear friends, *by a lack of loving in our labor*. The mere telling out the plan of salvation is of no great service. God may bless it, but He does not often do so.

That which God blesses to the saving of sinners is truth attended by the earnestness of the speaker—the loving anguish of a heart which stirs the preacher's soul. What shall I say here? For if I speak, I do but condemn myself. Think of the preaching of Baxter. He preached for many years, but he said he never went into his pulpit without his knees knocking together! And Martin Luther said the same. Truly it is enough to make any man tremble when he feels that he is God's mouth to immortal souls. "If they perish, and you warn them not, their blood will I require at your hands." Surely this ought to give a melting heart and streaming eyes to God's ministers! But, I say, I remember reading of Baxter's ministry—oh what pleading before was in it! The man seemed as if he never would go out of the pulpit till his hearers had received the truth. He wept, and sighed, and sobbed unless they came to Jesus Christ. You know how he followed them to their houses, watched them through the streets of Kidderminster, and would give them no rest till they thought about eternal things, and he was privileged thus to break the bread of life to many thousands, although his body was as full of physical pain as his heart was of holy anxiety!



O, for something of Mr. Baxter's spirit to make us love the souls of men as he did! We are guilty of withholding corn unless we preach with a sympathizing, loving, tender, affectionate, earnest, anxious soul! Brethren, you are, most of you, doing something for Jesus Christ. Let me, therefore, put this very plainly to you. If you get through your work for God as a mere matter of form—however true may be that which you have to say, and however carefully you may deliver it—yet still if the truth you deliver is not delivered with holy anxiety, with earnestness, with fervor, with love, with affection, and above all, if it is not attended with *prayer*—take heed lest in some day to come you get the curse of those from whom you withheld the bread!

How would you like, Sunday school teachers, to see a lad in your class grow up and go into sin? How would you like to meet him some day on a sick bed, when his vices had at last brought him to his end? How would you like that he should look into your face and say, “Ah, teacher, you were never earnest with me; you told me the truth, but you told it to me so coldly that I did not believe it! If I had seen one tear in your eyes, I think there would have been one in mine; if I thought you felt what you were saying, I sometimes think I should have felt it, too. But you merely kept me still, and told me it all as if it were no great matter, and so I doubted the whole, and from doubt went on to unbelief, and ran into sin, and here I am. O that you had wept over me as such-and-such a teacher did with my brother! How different is my brother from what I am! He was in another class, and his teacher took him before God in prayer—prayed *with* him as well as *for* him—told him the truth of God! But he did more—he labored to drive it home as with a great hammer, while he pleaded with him to lay hold on eternal life. Teacher, would to God that you had been more earnest with me.” Beloved, seek to rid yourselves of any future

regrets in this matter. It is no small satisfaction when you hear the death-bell toll, to say, “Well, I did all I could for that soul, and whether it is in heaven or hell, my conscience is clear.” You cannot save, but still, God, who works by means, may make you the instrument of conveying salvation to sinners—or, on the other hand, you may be made instruments of unrighteousness, through whom Satan may harden these children’s hearts, even to their everlasting ruin. I use the example of a Sunday school teacher, but I intend the remarks for every worker. O, let us work for God with our whole hearts! God make us more awfully in earnest! Life is earnest, death is earnest, heaven is earnest, hell is earnest, Christ is earnest, God is earnest—let us be clad with zeal, as with a cloak—and go forth to serve the Lord with all our soul and strength, as His Holy Spirit shall enable us.

4. Fourthly, we may be found guilty of withholding corn, *by refusing to labor zealously for the spread of the kingdom of Christ and the conversion of sinners.*

I am afraid that the churches of the past were not altogether without a curse because of their deficiency in the matter of missions and home evangelization. During the pastorate of my venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, this church, instead of increasing, gradually decreased; and although the age in which he lived was honored with many great and excellent men, yet the state of our own denomination, and the Presbyterian body, and the Independent body in England was most lamentable. Many of the churches were gradually sliding into Unitarianism, and the simple gospel of Jesus Christ was scarcely preached, or, where preached, it was without any power whatever—and I take it that the reason was very much that the churches were content to be edified themselves, but had no hearts of compassion for the perishing multitudes around and abroad. But mark this—from the day when Fuller,

Carey, Sutcliffe, and others, got together to send out missionaries to India, the sun began to dawn of a gracious revival which is not over yet! Bad as the state of the churches now is, yet it is marvelously an improvement upon anything before the age of missions. Though not as zealous as we ought to be, the zeal of Christendom is 100 times greater than it was then, and, as for what is done for winning souls, brethren, the churches now are like a garden of the Lord compared with what they were then. I believe that the neglect of sending the word to the heathen brought a blight and a curse upon the churches, which is now happily removed. Yet even today we find professors who are always doubting. They never get beyond—

“’Tis a point I long to know.”

There they stick, and never know whether they are saved or not. Full assurance is to be a tempting morsel which they have not yet tasted; their eyes do not sparkle with heavenly delight; they know not what it is to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; their raptures are very few, their joys very shallow. I will tell you why. In almost every case these people do nothing for souls; they withhold the corn, and therefore they get this curse in their souls, that they shall not enjoy their own religion because they do not want to lead other people into it. If you put your hands into your pockets and say, “Well, glory be to God; I trust I am one of the elect, and whatever becomes of the rest of mankind really is not my concern. Every man for himself, I say”—that is such an unchristian spirit, so antagonistic to the whole life of Jesus Christ, that if you get sorely whipped in providence, I can only hope you may be blessed by it; but I would not pray that the rod may be removed until you are scourged into a better temper. Give me the Christian who says, “I bless God I am saved; now what can I

do for others?” The first thing in the morning he prays, “God help me to say a word to some soul this day.” During the day, wherever he may be, he is watching his opportunity, and will do good if he can. He is concerned about his children—it sometimes breaks his heart to think that they are not saved; if he happens to have an ungodly wife, it is his daily burden, “Oh God, save my wife!” When he goes to a place of worship, he does not expect the minister to make sermons always on purpose for him, but he says, “I shall sit here and pray God to bless the word,” and if he looks round the chapel, and sees one that he loves, he prays for him, “God send the word home to him.” When service is over, a man of this kind will waylay the unconverted, and try to get a personal word with them, and see if he cannot discover some beginnings of divine grace in their souls. This is how earnest Christians live, and let me tell you, as a rule, though they have the griefs of other men’s souls to carry, they do not have much grief about their own; as a rule their Master favors them with the light of His countenance; they are watering others, and they are watered themselves, also. May this be your work and mine!

But some of you say nothing for Christ at all. You are too timid you say, and others of you are too indifferent, too thoughtless about others. Oh, the opportunities many of you have lost! Oh, the many that have died to whom you might have spoken, but you did not! Oh, the people that are now in the darkness of ignorance who get no light from you! You have light, but you keep it. They are dying, and you have the healing medicine, but you will not tell them of it! May God deliver you from the curse of those who thus withhold the corn!

We will only mention one more form of this evil. Some may be said to be guilty of withholding the corn because while they themselves do not speak for Christ, *they do not help those who can*. No Christian man ought to go to bed with an easy

conscience if he has thousands of pounds which he does not need which are unused for God. There must be many Christians in this rich country who have not consecrated their substance to the Lord. When a man can say, “I have money which I really do not need, and my children do not require it,” and this is money absolutely needed for God’s cause, ought he to keep it from the Lord Jesus? Must you confess that so many missionaries might be sent out tomorrow if you just wrote a check and handed it over to the proper society—then why not do it? A destitute neighborhood needs a place of worship, and if I can build it if I would, how am I to answer for it to my Lord? I cannot understand how a man or a woman can love God when they only live to heap up riches! I can with great difficulty imagine such a case, but I fear that such cannot be real piety; it seems to me that if I have any religion in my soul, it will make me not only say with Dr. Watts—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, my all,”

but I think it would make me carry it out. I will not propose to you that you should act indiscreetly in giving so as to deprive your families, or deprive yourselves of what is necessary; you know I am not so foolish. But I am speaking to many Christians who have not only enough to spare, but who will continue to accumulate, and accumulate, and accumulate, and I cannot think that they can feel that they are doing right in the sight of God. O God, this great city needs preachers, needs the gospel—thousands need even bread to keep them from starving—and yet many of Your professing people are heaping their coffers higher and higher! Why surely, if I do this, I am

heaping up wrath against the day of wrath, and I shall find it come into my bosom hot and fierce from the God of Sabaoth, to whom my gold and my silver will cry out against me! Let us not be guilty of this, but each in our own station, as far as we can, let us be aiding others to preach the word if we cannot preach it ourselves. Dozens of young men are desirous to enter our college, and you can help them to go forth to preach, if you cannot preach yourself.

**II.** I am pleased to turn to the other subject for a minute or two. I am to speak upon **THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH THOSE POSSESS WHO BREAK THE BREAD OF LIFE.**

To describe it is altogether beyond my power. You must know and taste, and feel it, beloved. There are many blessings in doing good to others. God is a good paymaster; He pays His servants while at work as well as when they have done it; and one of His payments is this—*an easy conscience*. If you have spoken faithfully to only one person, when you go to bed at night you feel happy in thinking, “I have this day discharged my conscience of that man’s blood.” You do not know how delightful a Sunday evening is to some of us when God has helped us to be faithful; how sweet to feel, “I have made many blunders, shown many infirmities of the flesh, and so on, but I have preached the gospel, and preached it with my whole heart to the best of my ability.” One feels a burden taken off one’s back, and there is a joy and satisfaction unknown to those who sit at home doing nothing. You in your class at the Sunday school, I know you feel, when Sunday is over, though it is a very hard day’s work for some of you after the six days’ toil in the week, you feel, “I thank God I did not spend that afternoon in lolling about at home, but I did speak a word for Jesus.” You will find such a peace of mind that you would not give it up for all the world.

Then, there is *a great comfort in doing something for Jesus*. Look into His face, what would you not do for Him? When first converted, did you not think you could do ten thousand things for Jesus? The moment your burden was off your back, and your sins forgiven, how you felt you could follow Him through floods and flames! Have you lived up to your resolutions, brethren? Have you kept up to your own ideas of Christian duties? I do not suppose any of us can say that we have; still, what little we have done has been an unspeakable delight, when we have felt that we have been crowning His head, and strewing palm branches in His path. O what happiness to place jewels in His crown, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul! Beloved, there is a very great reward in watching *the first buds of conviction in a young soul*! To say of that girl in the class, “She seems so tender of heart; I do hope that there is the Lord’s work there.” To go home and pray over that boy, who said something in the afternoon to make you think he must know something more than he seemed to know! Oh, the joy of hope!

But as *for the joy of success—it is unspeakable!* I recollect the first soul that God ever gave me—she is in heaven now—but I remember when my good deacon said to me, “God has set His seal on your ministry in this place, sir.” Oh, if anybody had said to me, “Somebody has left you 20,000 pounds,” I should not have given a snap of my fingers for it compared with that joy which I felt when I was told that God had set His seal on my ministry! “Who is it?” I asked. “Why, it is a poor laboring man’s wife! She went home broken-hearted by the sermon two or three Sundays ago, and she has been in great trouble of soul; but she has found peace, and she says she would like to speak to you.” I felt like the boy who has earned his first guinea; like a diver who has been down to the depths of the sea, and brought up a rare pearl! I prize each one whom God has given me—but I prize that woman most! Since then my God has

given me many thousands of souls who profess to have found the Savior by hearing or reading words which have come from my lips. Well, this joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry sort of joy—you want more of it, for the more you have of spiritual children, the more your soul desires to see them multiplied. Let me tell you that to be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in this world, and with every soul you bring to Jesus Christ you seem to get a new heaven here upon earth!

But what will be the joy of soul-winning when we get up above! What happiness to the Christian minister to be saluted on his entrance into heaven by many spiritual children! They will call him, “Father,” for though they are not married nor given in marriage, though natural relations are all over, yet spiritual relations last forever. Oh, how sweet is that sentence, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Do you know what the joy of Christ is over a saved sinner? You cannot guess it! You would need to know the griefs He suffered to save that sinner. O, the joys He must feel when He sees that sinner saved as the result of His griefs—this is the very joy which you and I are to possess in heaven—“Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Yes, when He mounts the throne, you shall mount with Him! When the heaven rings with, “Well done, well done!” you shall partake in the reward! You have toiled with Him! You have suffered with Him! You shall now reign with Him! You have sown with Him—you shall reap with Him! You were despised with Him—you shall now be honored with Him! Your face was covered with sweat like His, and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as His soul was—now shall your face be bright with heaven’s splendor as is His countenance! And now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys, even as His soul is! He who breaks bread, blessings shall be upon his head.

**III.** Now, I have to open the **GRANARY** for a minute.



Hungry sinners wanting a Savior, we cannot withhold the bread from you! You may never come to hear the gospel again; we, therefore, will open the granary very wide. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became Man to save men, and inasmuch as God's wrath was due to sin, Christ took the sin of all who have ever believed, or ever shall believe on Him, and, taking all their sins, He was punished in their place, so that God can now justly forgive sin, because Christ was punished in the place of sinners, and suffered divine wrath for them. Now this is the way of salvation—that you trust this Son of God with your soul, and, if you do so, then know that your sins are now forgiven you, and that you are saved! Concerning this salvation, hear just these few words.

It is a *satisfying salvation*. Here is all that you can want. Your conscience shall be at ease forever if you believe in Jesus—your biggest sins shall no longer trouble you, your blackest iniquities shall no longer haunt you. Believing in Jesus, every sin you have of thought, and word, and deed shall be cast into the depths of the sea, and shall never be mentioned against you any more forever.

It is an *all-sufficient salvation*, too. However great your sins, Christ's blood can take them all away; however deep your needs, Christ can supply them. You can not be so big a sinner as He is a Savior. You may be the worst sinner out of hell, but you are not too great for Him to remove—He can carry elephantine sinners upon His shoulders, and bear gigantic mountains of guilt upon His head into the wilderness of forgetfulness. He has enough for you, however deep your necessity.

It is, moreover, a *complete salvation*. Sovereign mercy does not stand on the mountain and cry to you, "Climb up here, and I will save you!" Eternal mercy *comes down* the valley to you just where you are, and meets your case just as it is—and never leaves you till it has made you meet to be a partaker of the

inheritance of the saints in light! Christ does not want you to pay one talent out of the hundred, and promise to pay for you the ninety-nine; He will discharge *all* your debts of sin! All that you need to take you up to heaven is provided in Jesus.

This is a *present salvation*—a salvation which, if it comes to you, will save you NOW! You shall be a child of God this very hour, and before that clock shall strike again, you shall rejoice in the peace which the Spirit of God gives you, if you believe on Him.

It is an *available salvation*, freely presented to you in Christ Jesus. Remember the text of two or three Sundays ago—“Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Jesus casts out none who come to Him. Oh that you may be led to come this morning!

Thus have I tried to avoid the sin of withholding corn; and if any in this house of prayer have been guilty of it, I pray you avoid the curse of the people, and seek the blessing of the Most High God by this day endeavoring to scatter everywhere the bread of life! Go and work for God wherever you have an opportunity, and help us in our prayers and efforts to send forth more laborers into the harvest, for the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Amen.

## 643 NO TEARS IN HEAVEN – REV. 7:17

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 6th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” —  
Revelation 7:17

IT IS AN ILL THING to be always mourning, sighing, and complaining concerning the *present*. However dark it may be, we may surely recall some fond remembrances of the *past*. There *were* days of brightness, there were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Be not slow to confess, O believing soul, that the Lord has been your help! And though now your burden is very heavy, you will find an addition to your strength in the thought of seasons long since past when the Lord lightened your load, and made your heart leap for joy. Yet more delightful will it be to expect the *future*. The night is dark, but the morning comes. Over the hills of darkness, the day breaks. It may be that the road is rough, but its end is almost in view. You have been clambering up the steep heights of Pisgah, and from its brow you may view your glorious heritage. True, the tomb is before you, but your Lord has snatched the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. Do not, O burdened spirit, confine yourself to the narrow miseries of the present hour, but let your eyes gaze with fondness upon the enjoyment of the past, and view with equal ardor the infinite blessings of old eternity when you were not, but when God set

you apart for Himself and wrote your name in His Book of Life; and let your glance flash forward to the future eternity, the mercies which shall be yours even here on earth, and the glories which are stored up for you beyond the skies. I shall be well rewarded, this morning, if I shall minister comfort to one heavy spirit by leading it to remember the glory which is yet to be revealed.

Coming to our text, we shall observe, in the first place, that as God is to wipe away tears from the faces of the glorified, *we may well infer that their eyes will be filled with tears till then.* And in the second place, it is worthy of reflection that as God never changes, *even now He is engaged in drying tears from His children's eyes.* And then, coming right into the heart of the text, we shall dwell upon the great truth of God, that *in heaven divine love removes all tears from the glorified;* and so we shall close, by making some *inquiry as to whether or not we belong to that happy company.*

**I.** Our first subject of meditation is the inference that **TEARS ARE TO FILL THE EYES OF BELIEVERS UNTIL THEY ENTER THE PROMISED REST.** There would be no need to wipe them away if there were none remaining. They come to the very gates of heaven weeping, and accompanied by their two comrades, sorrow and sighing; the tears are dried, and sorrow and sighing flee away. The weeping willow grows not by the river of the water of life, but it is plentiful enough below; nor shall we lose it till we change it for the palm branch of victory. Sorrow's dewdrop will never cease to fall until it is transformed into the pearl of everlasting bliss—

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”

Religion brings deliverance from the curse, but not exemption from trial.

The ancients were accustomed to use bottles in which to catch the tears of mourners. I think I see three bottles filled with the tears of believers. The first is a *common bottle*, the ordinary bottle containing griefs incidental to all men, for believers suffer even as the rest of the race. *Physical pain* by no means spares the servants of God. Their nerves, blood vessels, limbs, and inward organs are as susceptible to disease as those of unregenerate men. Some of the choicest saints have lain longest on beds of sickness, and those, who are dearest to the heart of God, have felt the heaviest blows of the chastening rod. There are pains which, despite the efforts of patience, compel the tears to wet the cheeks. The human frame is capable of a fearful degree of agony, and few there are who have not at some time or other watered their couch with tears because of the acuteness of their pains. Coupled with this, are *the losses and crosses of daily life*. What Christian among you trades without occasional difficulties and serious losses? Have any of you a lot so easy that you have nothing to deplore? Are there no crosses at home? Are there no troubles abroad? Can you travel from the first of January to the last of December without feeling the weariness of the way? Have you no blighted field, no bad debt, no slandered name, no harsh word, no sick child, no suffering wife to bring before the Lord in weeping prayer? You must be an inhabitant of another planet if you have had no griefs, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards! No ship can navigate the Atlantic of earth without meeting with storms—it is only upon the Pacific of heaven that all is calm forevermore. Believers must, through much tribulation, inherit the kingdom of heaven. “Trials must and will befall.” *Death* contributes to our woes; the heirs of immortality are often summoned to gather around the tomb. Who has not lost a friend? If Jesus wept, expect not that we shall be without the tears of bereavement; the well-beloved Lazarus died, and so will our

choicest friends. Parents will go before us, infants will be snatched from us, brothers and sisters will fall before the scythe of death. Impartial foe of all, you spare neither virtue nor vice, holiness nor sin; with equal foot you tread on the cherished loves of all!

The Christian also knows *disappointments* as bitter and as keen as other men. Judas betrays Christ, Ahithophel is a traitor to David. We have had our Ahithophels, and we may yet meet with our Judas. We have trusted in friends, and we have found their friendships fail. We have leaned upon what seemed a staff, and it has pierced us like a spear. You cannot, dear friends, traverse the wilderness of this world without discovering that thorns and thistles grow plenteously in it, and that, step as you may, your feet must sometimes feel their power to wound. The sea of life is salt to all men. Clouds hover over every landscape. We may forget to laugh, but we shall always know how to weep. As the saturated fleece must drip, so must the human race, cursed by the fall, weep out its frequent griefs.

I see before me *a second bottle. It is black and foul*, for it contains tears distilled by the force of the fires of sin. This bottle holds more than the first, and is far more regularly filled. Sin is more frequently the mother of sorrow than all the other ills of life put together. Dear brethren, I am convinced that we endure more sorrow from our sins than from God's darkest providences. Mark our rebellious *lack of resignation!* When a trouble comes, it is not the trial which makes us groan so much as our rebellion against it. It is true the ox goad is thrust into us, but we kick against it, and then it hurts us far more. Like men with naked feet, we kick against the pricks. We head our vessel against the stream of God's will, and then murmur because the waves beat violently upon us. An unsubdued will is like a maniac's hand which tears himself. The chastisements which come directly from our heavenly Father are never as

hard to bear as the fretting and fuming of our unhumbled self-will. As the bird dashes against the wires of its cage and breaks its own wing, even so do we. If we would take the cross as our gracious Father gives it, it would not gall our shoulders, but since we revolt from it, and loathe the burden, our shoulders grow raw and sore, and the load becomes intolerable. More submission and we would have fewer tears.

There are the tears, too, of *wounded, injured pride*, and how hot and scalding they are! When a man has been ambitious and has failed, how he will weep instead of standing corrected, or gathering up his courage for a wiser venture. When a friend has spoken slightly of us, or an enemy has accused us, how we have had to put our fingers to our hot eyelids to keep the tears from streaming out, and have felt all the while as full of wretchedness as we well could be. Ah, these are cruel and wicked tears. God wipe them away from our eyes now! Certainly He must do it before we shall be able to enter heaven. How numerous, too, are the tears of *unbelief*! We manufacture troubles for ourselves by anticipating future ills which may never come, or which, if they do come, may be like the clouds, all “big with mercy,” and “breaking with blessings on our head.” We get to supposing what we should do if such-and-such a thing occurred, which thing God has determined never shall occur. We imagine ourselves in positions where providence never intends to place us, and so we feel a thousand trials in fearing one. That bottle, I say, ought never to carry within it a tear from a believer’s eyes, and yet it has had whole floods poured into it. Oh, the wickedness of mistrust of God, and the bitterness with which that distrust is made to curse itself. Unbelief makes a rod for its own back; distrust of God is its own punishment; it brings such lack of rest, such care, such tribulation of spirit into the mind, that he who loves himself

and loves pleasure, had better seek to walk by faith and not by sight.

Nor must I forget the scalding drops of *anger against our fellow men*, and of petulance and irritation, because we cannot have our way with them. These are black and horrid tears, as noisome as the vaults of Tophet. May we be saved from such unholy tears. Sometimes, too, there are streams which arise from *depressed spirits*—spirits desponding because we have neglected the means of divine grace and the God of grace. The consolations of God are small with us because we have been seldom in secret prayer; we have lived at a distance from the Most High, and we have fallen into a melancholy state of mind. I thank God that there shall never come another tear from our eyes into that bottle when eternal love shall take us up to dwell with Jesus in His kingdom!

We would never overlook the *third bottle* which is the true crystal bottle into which holy tears may drop, tears like the "*lachrymae Christi*," the tears of Jesus, so precious in the sight of God. Even these shall cease to flow in heaven. Tears of *repentance*, like glistening dewdrops fresh from the skies, are stored in this bottle. They are not of the earth, they come from heaven, and yet we cannot carry them there with us. Good Rowland Hill used to say repentance was such a sweet companion, that the only regret he would have in going to heaven was in leaving repentance behind him, for he could not shed the tears of repentance there. Oh, to weep for sin! It is so sweet a sorrow that I would wish to be a constant weeper! Like a dripping well, my soul would always drop with grief that I have offended my loving, tender, gracious God. Tears for *Christ's injured honor and slightedness* glisten in the crystal of our third bottle. When we hear Jesus' name blasphemed among men, or see His cause driven back in the day of battle, who will not weep? Who can restrain his lamentations? Such tears are



diamonds in Christ's esteem; blessed are the eyes which are mines of such royal treasure. If I cannot win crowns, I will at least give tears. If I cannot make men love my Master, yet will I weep in secret places for the dishonor which they do Him. These are holy drops, but they are all unknown in heaven. Tears of *sympathy* are much esteemed by our Lord; when we "weep with those who weep" we do well; these are never to be restrained this side the Jordan. Let them flow; the more of them, the better for our spiritual health. Truly, when I think of the griefs of men, and above all, when I have communion with my Savior in His suffering, I want to cry with George Herbert—

"Come all you floods, you clouds, you rains,  
Dwell in my eyes! My grief has need  
Of all the watery things that nature can produce!  
Let every vein suck up a river to supply my eyes,  
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, fresh supplies,  
And with my state agree."

It were well to go to the very uttermost of weeping if it were always of such a noble kind, as fellowship with Jesus brings. Let us never cease from weeping over sinners as Jesus did over Jerusalem; let us endeavor to snatch the firebrand from the flame, and weep when we cannot accomplish our purpose.

These three receptacles of tears will always be more or less filled by us as long as we are here, but in heaven the first bottle will not be needed, for the wells of earth's grief will all be dried up, and we shall drink from living fountains of water unsalted by a tear. As for the second, we shall have no depravity in our hearts, and so the black fountain will no longer yield its nauseous stream; and as for the third, there shall be no place

among celestial occupations for weeping even of the most holy kind. Till then, we must expect to share in human griefs, and instead of praying against them, let us ask that they may be sanctified to us; I mean of course those of the former sort. Let us pray that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience, and experience the hope which makes us not ashamed. Let us pray that as the sharp edge of the engraving tool is used upon us, it may only remove our filth, and fashion us into images of our Lord and Master. Let us pray that the fire may consume nothing but the dross, and that the floods may wash away nothing but defilement. May we have to thank God that, though before we were afflicted we went astray, yet now, by His grace, we have kept His Word; and so shall we see it to be a blessed thing, a divinely wise thing, that we should tread the path of sorrow, and reach the gates of heaven with the teardrops glistening in our eyes.

**II. Secondly, EVEN HERE, IF WE WOULD HAVE OUR TEARS WIPED AWAY, WE CANNOT DO BETTER THAN RETURN TO OUR GOD.**

He is the great tear wiper. Observe, brethren, that God can remove every vestige of grief from the hearts of His people by granting them complete resignation to His will. Our selfhood is the root of our sorrow. If self were perfectly conquered, it would be insignificant to us whether love ordained our pain, or ease appointed us wealth or poverty. If our will were completely God's will, then pain itself would be attended with pleasure, and sorrow would yield us joy for Christ's sake. As one fire puts out another, so the master passion of love to God and complete absorption in His sacred will quenches the fire of human grief and sorrow. Hearty resignation puts so much honey in the cup of gall that the wormwood is forgotten. As death is swallowed up in victory, so is tribulation swallowed up in contentedness and delight in God.

He can also take away our tears by compelling our minds to dwell with delight upon the end which all our trials are working to produce. He can show us that they are working together for good, and as men of understanding, when we see that we shall be essentially enriched by our losses, we shall be content with them; when we see that the medicine is curing us of mortal sickness, and that our sharpest pains are only saving us from pains far more terrible, then shall we kiss the rod and sing in the midst of tribulation, “Sweet affliction!” Sweet affliction, since it yields such peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Moreover, He can take every tear from our eyes in the time of trial by shedding abroad the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts more plentifully. He can make it clear to us that Christ is afflicted in our affliction. He can indulge us with a delightful sense of the divine virtue which dwells in His sympathy, and make us rejoice to be co-sufferers with the Angel of the Covenant. The Savior can make our hearts leap for joy by reassuring us that we are written on the palms of His hands, and that we shall be with Him where He is. Sick beds become thrones, and hovels ripen into palaces when Jesus is made sure to our souls! My brethren, the love of Christ, like a great flood, rolls over the most rugged rocks of afflictions— so high above them that we may float in perfect peace where others are a total wreck. The rage of the storm is all hushed when Christ is in the vessel. The waters saw You, O Christ! The waters saw You and were silent at the presence of their King!

The Lord can also take away all present sorrow and grief from us by providentially removing its cause. Providence is full of sweet surprises and unexpected turns. When the sea has ebbd its uttermost, it turns again and covers all the sand. When we think the dungeon is fast, and that the bolt is rusted in, He can make the door fly open in a moment! When the river rolls deep and black before us, He can divide it with a word, or

bridge it with His hands. How often have you found it so in the past? As a pilgrim to Canaan, you have passed through the Red Sea, in which you once feared you would be drowned; the bitter wells of Marah were made sweet by God's presence; you fought the Amalekite; you went through the terrible wilderness, you passed by the place of the fiery serpents, and you have yet been kept alive, and so shall you be. As the clear shining comes after rain, so shall peace succeed your trials. As fly the black clouds before the compelling power of the wind, so will the eternal God make your griefs to fly before the energy of His grace. The smoking furnace of trouble shall be followed by the bright lamp of consolation.

Still, the surest method of getting rid of present tears is communion and fellowship with God. When I can creep under the wing of my dear God and nestle close to His bosom, let the world say what it will, and let the devil roar as he pleases, and let my sins accuse and threaten as they may—I am safe, content, happy, peaceful, rejoicing—

“Let earth against my soul engage,  
And hellish darts be hurled;  
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,  
And face a frowning world.”

To say, “My Father, God,” to put myself right into His hands, and feel that I am safe there; to look up to Him though it is with tears in my eyes and feel that He loves me, and then to put my head right into His bosom as the prodigal did, and sob my griefs out there into my Father's heart—oh, this is the death of grief, and the life of all consolation! Is not Jehovah called the God of all comfort? You will find Him so, beloved. He has been “our help in ages past.” He is “our hope for years to come.” If He had not been my help, then my soul would

have perished utterly in the day of its weariness and its heaviness, Oh, I bear testimony for Him this day that you cannot go to Him and pour out your heart before Him without finding a delightful solace! When your friends cannot wipe away the tears, when you yourself with your strongest reasoning, and your boldest efforts cannot compel yourself to resignation; when your heart beats high and seems as if it would burst with grief, then pour out your hearts before Him! God *is* a refuge for us! He is our castle and high tower, our refuge and defense. Only go to Him, and you shall find that even here on earth God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes!

**III.** Now, we shall have to turn our thoughts to what is the real teaching of the text, namely, **THE REMOVAL OF ALL TEARS FROM THE BLESSED ONES ABOVE.**

There are many reasons why glorified spirits cannot weep. These are well known to you, but let us just hint at them. *All outward causes of grief are gone.* They will never hear the toll of the death knell in heaven. The mattock and the shroud are unknown things there. The horrid thought of death never flits across an immortal spirit. They are never parted; the great meeting has taken place to part no more. Up yonder, they have no losses and crosses in business. "They serve God day and night in His temple." They know no broken friendships there. They have no ruined hearts, no blighted prospects. They know even as they are known, and they love even as they are loved. No pain can ever fall on them—as yet they have no bodies, but when their bodies shall be raised from the grave, they shall be spiritualized so that they shall not be capable of grief. The tear glands shall be plucked away; although much may be there that is human, at least the tear glands shall be gone—they shall have no need of that organ; their bodies shall be unsusceptible to grief; they shall rejoice forever! Poverty, famine, distress, nakedness, peril, persecution, slander—all these shall have

ceased. “The sun shall not light on them, nor any heat.” “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore,” and therefore, well may their tears cease to flow.

Again, *all inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification worked in them by the Holy Spirit.* No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God shall vex them in paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. They shall never be led to think harshly of God, for their hearts shall be all love; sin shall have no sweetness to them, for they shall be perfectly purified from all depraved desires. There shall be no lusts of the eyes, no lusts of the flesh, no pride of life to be snares to their feet. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They are forever blessed, because they are without fault before the throne of God. What a heaven must it be to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Well may *they* cease to mourn who have ceased to sin!

*All fear of change also has been forever shut out.* They know that they are eternally secure. Saints on earth are fearful of falling, some believers even dream of falling away; they think God will forsake them, and that men will persecute and take them. No such fears can vex the blessed ones who view their Father’s face. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while it endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in a sun which shall never set; they swim in a flood-tide which shall never ebb; they drink of a river which shall never dry up; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never be withered. Their blessedness knows not the thought, which would act like a canker at its heart, that it might, perhaps, pass away and cease to be. They cannot, therefore, weep, because they are infallibly secure, and certainly assured of their eternal blessedness.

*Why should they weep when every desire is gratified?* They cannot wish for anything which they shall not have. Eyes and ears, heart and hands, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will—every faculty shall be satisfied! All that their vast powers can wish, they shall continually enjoy. Though, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them who love Him,” yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, to understand that they are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite beatitude!

Still, dear friends, this does not quite account for the fact, that all tears are wiped from their eyes. I like better the text which tells us that *God* shall do it, and I want you to think with me of fountains of tears which exist even in heaven, so that the celestial ones must inevitably weep if God did not by a perpetual miracle take away their tears. It strikes me, that if God Himself did not interfere by a perpetual outflow of abundant consolations, the glorified would have very deep cause for weeping. You will say, “How is this?” Why, in the first place, if it were not for this, *what regrets they must have for their past sins*. The more holy a man is, the more he hates sin. It is a token of growth in sanctification, not that repentance becomes less acute, but that it becomes more and more deep. Surely, dear friends, when we shall be made perfectly holy, we shall have a greater hatred of sin! If on earth, we could be perfectly holy, why, I think we would do little else than mourn to think that so foul, and black, and venomous a thing as sin had ever stained us; that we would weep bitterly that we had ever offended such a good, gracious, tender, abundantly loving God. Why, the sight of Christ, “The Lamb in the midst of the throne,” would make us remember the sins from which He purged us; the sight of our heavenly Father’s perfection would be blinding to us if

it were not that by some sacred means, which we know not, God wipes away all these tears from our eyes. And though we cannot but regret that we have sinned, yet perhaps we will know that sin has been made to glorify God by the overcoming power of almighty grace; that sin has been made to be a black foil, a sort of setting for the sparkling jewel of eternal, sovereign grace, and it may be that for this reason we shed no tears over our past lives. They sing, “Unto Him Who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood,” but they sing that heavenly song without a tear in their eyes. I cannot understand how this may be, for I know I could not do so as I now am—let this be the best reason that God has wiped away the tears from their eyes.

Again, do you not think, beloved, that the thought of the vast expense of shame and woe which the Savior lavished for our redemption must, in the natural order of things, be a constant source of grief? We sing sometimes that hymn which reminds us of the angelic song before the throne, and in one of its verses the poet says—

“But when to Calvary they turn,  
Silent their harps abide;  
Suspended songs a moment mourn  
The God who loved and died.”

Now that is natural and poetical, but it is not true, for you know very well that there are no suspended songs in heaven, and that there is no mourning even over Christ “Who loved and died.” It seems to me, that if I were thoroughly spiritualized, and in such a holy state as those are in heaven, I could not look at the Lamb without tears in my eyes. How could I think of those five wounds; that bloody sweat in Gethsemane; that cruel crowning with thorns in Gabbatha; that mockery and shame at



Golgotha—how could I think of it without tears? How could I feel that He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*, without bursting into a passion of holy affection and sorrow? Tears seem to be the natural expression of such hallowed joy and grief—

“Love and grief my heart dividing,  
With my tears His feet I’ll bathe.”

I must think it would be so in heaven if it were not that by a glorious method, I know not how, God shall wipe away even those tears from our eyes. Does it not need the interference of God to accomplish this wonder?

Is there not another cause for grief, namely, *wasted opportunities*? Beloved, when we once ascend to heaven, there will be no more feeding of Christ’s hungry people; there will be no giving of drink to the thirsty; no visiting His sick ones, or His imprisoned ones; no clothing of the naked. There will be no instructing the ignorant; no holding forth the Word of God among “a crooked and perverse generation.” It has been often and truly said, if there could be regrets in heaven, those regrets would be that we have wasted so many opportunities of honoring Christ on earth—opportunities which will then be gone forever. Now in heaven their hearts are not steeled and hardened, so that they can look back upon sins of omission without sorrow. I believe there will be the tenderest form of conscience there—for perfect purity would not be consistent with any degree of hardness of heart. If they are sensitive and tender in heart, it is inevitable that they should look back with regret upon the failures of the life below—unless some more mighty emotion should overwhelm that of contrition. I can say, beloved, if God would take me to heaven, this morning, if He did not come in and by a special act of His omnipotence dry up that fountain of tears, I would almost forget the glories of

paradise in the midst of my own shame! Shame that I have not preached more earnestly, and have not prayed more fervently, and labored more abundantly for Christ. That text, to which we heard a reference from a dear brother during the week, where Paul says, “I call God to witness that for the space of three years I ceased not night and day with tears, to warn every one of you,” is a text that we cannot, any of us, read without blushes and tears. And in heaven, I think if I saw the apostle Paul, I must burst out in weeping if it were not for this text, which says that, “God shall wipe away *all* tears”—and these among them. Who but the Almighty God could do this!

Perhaps, again, another source of tears may suggest itself to you—namely, *regrets in heaven for our mistakes, and misrepresentations, and unkindness towards other Christian brethren*. How surprised we shall be to meet in heaven some whom we did not love on earth! We would not commune with them at the Lord’s Table. We would not acknowledge that they were Christians at all! We looked at them suspiciously if we saw them in the street. We were jealous of all their operations. We suspected their zeal as being nothing better than rant, and we looked upon their best exertions as having sinister motives at the bottom. We said many hard things, and felt a great many more than we said. When we shall see these unknown and unrecognized brethren in heaven, will not their presence naturally remind us of our offenses against Christian love and spiritual unity? I cannot suppose a perfect man looking at another perfect man, without regretting that he ever ill-treated him—it seems to me to be the trait of a gentleman, a Christian, and of a perfectly sanctified man above all others, that he should regret having misunderstood, and misconstrued, and misrepresented one who was as dear to Christ as himself. I am sure, as I go round among the saints in heaven; I cannot (in the natural order of things) help feeling, “I did not assist you as I

ought to have done. I did not sympathize with you as I ought to have done. I spoke a hard word to you. I was estranged from you,” and I think you would all have to feel the same—inevitably you must, if it were not that by some heavenly means, I know not how—the eternal God shall so overshadow believers with the abundant bliss of His own self that even that *cause* of tears shall be wiped away!

Has it never struck you, dear friends, that if you go to heaven and *see your dear children left behind unconverted*, it would naturally be a cause of sorrow? When my mother told me that if I perished, she would have to say, “Amen,” to my condemnation, I knew it was true, and it sounded very terrible, and had a good effect on my mind. But at the same time, I could not help thinking, “Well, you will be very different from what you are now,” and I did not think she would be improved. I thought, “Well, I love to think of your weeping over me far better than to think of you as a perfect being, with a tearless eye, looking on the damnation of your own child.” It really is a very terrible spectacle, the thought of a perfect being looking down upon hell, for instance, as Abraham did, and yet feeling no sorrow, for you will recollect that in the tones in which Abraham addressed the rich man, there is nothing of pity, there is not a single syllable which betokens any sympathy with him in his dreadful woes; and one does not quite comprehend that perfect beings, God-like beings, beings full of love and everything that constitutes the glory of God’s complete nature, should yet be unable to weep, even over hell itself; they cannot weep over their own children lost and ruined! Now, how is this? If you can tell me, I shall be glad—for I cannot tell you. I do not believe that there will be one atom less tenderness, that there will be one fraction less of amiability, and love, and sympathy—I believe there will be more—but that they will be in some way so refined and purified, that while compassion for

suffering is there, detestation of sin shall be there to balance it, and a state of complete equilibrium shall be attained. Perfect acquiescence in the divine will is probably the secret of it; but it is not my business to guess; I do not know what handkerchief the Lord will use, but I know that He will wipe all tears away from their faces, and these tears among them.

Yet, once again, it seems to me that spirits before the throne, taking, as they must do, a deep interest in everything which concerns the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, *must feel deeply grieved when they see the cause of truth imperiled, and the kingdom of Christ, for a time, put back.* Think of Luther, or Wickliffe, or John Knox as they see the advances of Popery just now. Take John Knox first, if you will. Think of him looking down and seeing cathedrals rising in Scotland, dedicated to the service of the Pope and Satan. Oh, how the stern old man, even in glory, I think, would begin to shake; and the old lion would lash his sides once more, and half wish that he could come down and pull the nests to pieces that the rooks might fly away. Think of Wickliffe looking down on this country where the gospel has been preached so many years, and seeing monks in the Church of England, and seeing spring up in our national establishment everywhere, not *disguised* Popery as it was 10 years ago, but stark naked Popery, downright Popery, that unblushingly talks about the “Catholic Church,” and is not even Anglican any longer! What would Wickliffe say? Why, I think as he leans over the battlements of heaven, unless Wickliffe is mightily altered, and I cannot suppose he is (except for the better, and that would make him more tender-hearted and still more zealous for God), he must weep to think that England has gone back so far, and that on the dial of Ahaz the sun has beat a retreat. I do not know how it is they do not weep in heaven, but they do not.

The souls under the altar cry, “How long? How long? How long?” There comes up a mighty intercession from those who

were slaughtered in the days gone by for Christ—their prayer rises, “How long? How long? How long?” And God, as yet, does not avenge His own elect, though they cry day and night unto Him. Yet that delay does not cost them a single tear. They feel so sure that the victory will come, they anticipate so much the more splendid triumph because of its delay, and therefore, they do both patiently hope, and quietly wait to see the salvation of God. They know that, without us, they cannot be made perfect, and so they wait till we are taken up, that the whole company may be completed, and that then the soul may be dressed in its body and they may be perfected in their bliss—they wait, but they do not weep. They wait and they cry, but in their cry, no sorrow has a place. Now, I do not understand this. It seems to me that the more I long for the coming of Christ, the more I long to see His kingdom extended, the more I shall weep when things go wrong, when I see Christ blasphemed, His cross trampled in the mire, and the devil’s kingdom established; but the reason is all in this, “*God* shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

I thought I would just indicate to you why it says that God does it. It strikes me that these causes of tears could not be removed by an angel, could not be taken away by any form of spiritual enjoyment apart from the direct interposition of Almighty God. Think of all these things and wonder over them, and you will recall many other springs of grief which would have flowed freely if omnipotence had not dried them up completely. Then ask how it is that the saints do not weep and do not cry, and you cannot get any other answer than this—God has done it in a way unknown to us—forever taking away from them the power to weep.

**IV. And now, beloved, SHALL WE BE AMONG THIS HAPPY COMPANY?**

Here is the question and the context enables us to answer it. “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” There is their character. “Therefore are they before the throne of God.” The blood is a sacred argument for their being there, the precious blood. Observe, “They washed their robes.” It was not merely their feet, their worst parts—but they washed their robes, their best parts. A man’s robes are his most honored attire, he puts them on, and he does not mind our seeing his robes. There may be filthiness beneath, but the robes are generally the cleanest of all. But you see they washed even them. Now, it is the mark of a Christian that he not only goes to Christ to wash away his black sins, but to wash his duties, too. I would not pray a prayer unwashed with Jesus’ blood; I would not like a hymn I have sung to go up to heaven except it had first been bathed in His blood; if I would desire to be clothed with zeal as with a cloak, yet I must wash the cloak in my Master’s blood; though I would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and wear imparted righteousness as a raiment of needlework, yet I must wash even that in His blood.

What do you say, dear friends? Have you washed in His blood? The meaning of it is, *have you trusted in the atoning sacrifice?* “Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” Have you taken Christ to be your all in all? Are you now depending on Him? If so, out of deep distress you shall yet ascend, leaning on your Beloved, to the throne of God, and to the bliss which awaits His chosen. But if not, “There is none other name,” there is no other way. Your damnation will be as just as it will be sure. Christ is “the Way.” But if you will not tread it, you shall not reach the end. Christ is “the truth,” but if you will not believe Him, you shall not rejoice. Christ is “the Life,” but if you will not receive Him you shall abide among the dead, and be cast out among the corrupt. From such a doom, may the

Lord deliver us, and give us a simple confidence in the divine work of the Redeemer, and to Him shall be the praise eternally. Amen.

## **644 GOD'S WITNESSES – ISA. 43:10**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 13th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant,  
whom I have chosen.” — Isaiah 43:10**

YOU, most of you, know that I am incessantly engaged every hour in the week either in preaching the gospel or in endeavoring to discharge the multifarious duties connected with this immense church. Now I always look upon my Saturdays as being consecrated, as far as possible, to meditation and study, that I may find something to set before you on the Lord's Day. But, unfortunately for me, I was served with a subpoena to attend the courts at Croydon, and was compelled to spend the whole of yesterday sitting in a hot and crowded court. There is a vast difference between the throne of grace and the bench of justice, and between communion with heaven and converse with lawyers and witnesses. I tried to think, while sitting there, but I found the business so distracting, that I went home with a headache and thought I would scarcely be able to preach to the assembled crowds on the morrow. It struck me, however, that if I could not preach about anything else, I must just try to get something out of the occupation of yesterday. Perhaps we may glean some profitable ears of corn among such unlikely stubble. Let me draw your attention to the text, and



compel my occupation of yesterday to yield a few illustrations to set forth its meaning.

As the text stands, in its context, we have before us a great assembly. All the nations of the earth are summoned to bring forth their rival gods, and the question to be decided is this—which one of them is the living and true God? The mode of test is this most admirable one—*which out of these gods has foretold the future?* Among all these followers of various idols, which of them can claim that their deity possesses the gift of foresight? Let all the venerated blocks of wood and stone bring forward their witnesses! They can tell of sibylline oracles, of strange mysterious mutterings, which contained doubtful declarations hidden under ambiguous terms. The Lord demands that there shall be presented before this court plain prophecies, distinct declarations of events which could not have been foreseen by human discernment. In this respect, the gods of the heathen failed, but when Jehovah summoned His people Israel, and put them into the witness box, and said to them, “You are My witnesses,” they were able distinctly to prove that all the great events of their national history had been foretold by their God, and that each had occurred precisely as foretold. Not one of His prophecies had failed; not one word had dropped to the ground. Surely the Jew might, with great satisfaction, recur to that ancient prophecy which is recorded in the 15th chapter of the book of Genesis. We read in the 12th verse of that chapter that, “When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And He said unto Abram, know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth

generation they shall come here again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

Every descendant of the patriarch could point to this as a revelation given to his great ancestor, at a time when such events seemed improbable, and yet it was literally fulfilled. The people went down into Egypt; they stayed there till the 400 years of this prophecy had been fulfilled; at that very hour they came out of Egypt. With a strong hand and with an outstretched arm did God bring them out; He judged Egypt with many plagues and with a terrible overthrow in the Red Sea; but Israel came out with great substance, for we find that they had jewels of silver and jewels of gold. After 40 years they found the sin of the original inhabitants of Canaan was full, and that the set time was come for their slaughter and destruction. All this was fulfilled verbatim, and in the 18th and following verses there is a continuation of the prophecy, and this, too, was literally accomplished. “Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” And all the inhabitants of the land were to be destroyed, and Canaan was to be the possession of the descendants of the solitary man who, as a stranger and a pilgrim with his God, trod its acres without owning a foot of the soil. This early prophecy was so exactly accomplished that to Israel it was conclusive proof that Jehovah was truly the Lord.

Moreover, the Jews could say that in every national event they had always been forewarned. Was David appointed that his seed should rule over Israel? Jacob long before had seen the scepter in the tribe of Judah. Was the kingdom to be divided at the latter end of the reign of Solomon? Ahijah tears the

garment of Jeroboam, and foretells that he shall take ten pieces to make another kingdom for himself. Was the race of Jeroboam to be put away? Remember the terrible words, “There shall not be left so much as a dog of the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.” Were they to be molested for their sins by the neighboring nations? God always sent to them a warning prophet to bid them repent, lest suddenly they should feel the smarting rod.

Now, what the Jew could say in Isaiah’s day, we can say yet more fully! My brethren, it is our happiness to live in an age when expeditions to eastern lands are proving every letter of prophecy! Go to Nineveh and mark her heap, and her solitary river flowing silently to the sea. Did it ever seem likely that Tigris and Euphrates, where the Chaldeans made their boast in their ships, upon whose banks stood the two greatest cities of antiquity, should become the haunt of dragons and owls? Go to Nineveh and learn what God can do, and how He can foresee the desolation of His foes. Cast your eyes to the beach of Tyre where the fisherman spreads his net, and there is not a ship to be seen, but where once the commerce of half the world floated in its glory. Tread the silent and deserted halls of Petra, and shiver as you read the words—“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; who says in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, there will I bring you down, says the LORD.” Where is Moab? What ails you, O Ammon? Where are those boastful monarchs who said, “We are rulers forever: we shall sit upon our thrones and know no sorrow”? Jehovah has spoken and has done it—He is God—He only is the God of the whole earth!

This is the scene presented before us in the text—the whole assembled nations, and the Jewish people brought

together to prove that in their sacred books they had distinct notification of future events, proving that God is God, since no heathen idols have been able, after this sort, to foresee or to foretell.

We will depart from the precise meaning of the text, and take it in a very truthful sense, though not in the one originally intended. Believers in Christ Jesus, you take the place of Israel of old, and you are, every one of you, God's witnesses this day. A great controversy is going on between God and the world. The world puts its witnesses forward to speak in its name; and you, the chosen ones of the Most High, are ordained to this office, to be testifiers and witness-bearers for your God and for His truth. "You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant, whom I have chosen."

**I.** We will advance at once to our subject by mentioning some of **THE QUESTIONS UPON WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO GIVE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THEIR GOD.**

These questions are the weightiest which can be discussed. One of the first is this—*is there such a thing nowadays as a distinct interposition of God on behalf of man in answer to believing prayer?* The world ridicules the idea. The horse laugh is heard the moment you talk about the efficacy of prayer and faith. "Why," some say, "the wind that drives the pirate on the rock will also cause the shipwreck of a vessel laden with ministers of the gospel. Providence is alike severe in its severities, and alike bountiful in its bounties. The rain falls upon the field of the wicked, as well as upon the field of the righteous. God has gone away from earth and left it to manage itself—has wound it up like a clock and set it going, and now He does not interfere, but lets each wheel act upon the other wheel, and the whole machinery goes on without any interposition from His hand." That is the world's theory.

Now, in opposition to this, we hold that, albeit the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, yet still, in those very events, there are distinct differences in God's dealings. But that is not precisely the question. The question is whether or not God does answer prayer and come to the assistance and deliverance of those who have faith in Him. We declare that He does do so. I think, dear friends, if I were to call some of you into the witness box, you would give very clear and distinct proofs of this. Suppose I call Mr. George Muller, of Bristol? He would say, "Look at those three orphan houses, containing no less than 1,150 orphan children, who are entirely supported by funds sent to me in answer to prayer. Look," says he, "at this fact—that when the water was dried up in Bristol, and the water works were not able to serve sufficient water to the people—I, with my more than 1,000 children dependent upon me, never asked any man for a drop of water, but I went on my knees before God, and a farmer who was neither directly nor indirectly asked by me, called at my door the next hour and offered to bring us water! And when he ceased because his supplies were dried up, instead of telling anybody, I went to my God and told Him all about it, and another friend offered to let me fetch water from his brook." He will point you to his report in connection with the orphan houses these many years, and say to you, "Here it is—I solemnly assert that I never told any man one of my needs, but went straight away to call unto my God—and while I have been calling, He has answered me, and while I have yet been speaking, He has sent the reply." And George Muller is no solitary specimen. We can, each of us, tell of like events in our own history. Indeed, it would be hard for me to find in my life, a case in which I have asked and not received. I should find it difficult to discover a season in which I have cried unto God and not received deliverance during the whole run and tenor of my life.

I admit it to be shorter than that of some of you, but yet that short life suffices for me to say that in hundreds of instances, I have had as distinct answers to prayer as if God had thrust His right hand through the blue sky and given right into my lap, the bounty which I had sought of Him. Now, we are not insane; we are not so wonderfully enthusiastic—we wish we were a little more so; many of us are as soldiers' souls, as common sense acting men as any that are to be found. There are brothers here who exhibit a shrewdness in business which would screen them from being called fools by worldlings themselves, and yet our unanimous witness as Christians is this—we have sought God, and He has heard us—and though we have been brought very low, if we have been enabled to cry out to God, even from the very depths, He has delivered us in our hour of need! Upon this point the Christian should take care that he bears very clear testimony, for he certainly may do it without any difficulty.

There is a question, also, *as to the ultimate results of present affliction*. The world holds, as a theory, that if there is a God, He is very often exceedingly unkind; that He is severe to the best of men, and that some men are the victims of a cruel fate; that they are greatly to be pitied because they have to suffer much without compensating profit. Now, the Christian holds, first of all, that the woes of sinners are punishments, and are very different from the chastening sorrows of believers. Of these last, he believes that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. He believes, as a matter of faith, that he gains by his losses; that he gets health by his sicknesses, and that he makes progress towards heaven by that which threatens to drive him back. This, I say, is the doctrine with which he begins! Now what is your testimony, brother Christian, with regard to this as a matter of experience? How have you found it? I must speak

for myself, and say, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” All of you who have sounded the deeps of soul-trouble, and have enjoyed the presence of Jesus, can distinctly testify the same. You have found that affliction works the comfortable fruits of righteousness, though now, for a season, it is anything but joyous. You have, some of you, passed through very severe difficulties and trials—I have been the sympathizing witness of the griefs of some of you—but I have heard you say, and say it confidently, not in moments of religious excitement, but in times of sober quiet, that you would not have had it otherwise for all the world. I have heard you say, and I know you are ready to repeat it in any company and in any place, that if you could have altered your past life, especially as to its trials and its difficulties, you would not now in looking back upon it, have had it altered for a thousand worlds. Oh no, the rough was a right way; the tempest purged the pestilential air; the earthquake shook down houses of evil; the fire consumed heaps of wood, hay and stubble. In this thing may I beg you always clearly and distinctly to state the truth as witnesses for your God.

A third point very much in dispute is as to *the joyfulness of a true believer's life*. The world's theory is that we are a very miserable set of people, who take to religion from the necessity of a naturally melancholy disposition. “The gloomy tenets of Calvin,” as they are generally called, “the horrid dogmas of Calvin,” are supposed to possess congenial charms for minds gloomy and morose. Now, what is your testimony, Christian, especially you Christians who have learned to see in “the horrid dogmas of Calvin” the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, we can say if we are melancholy, joyous people must be very joyful, indeed. We sometimes think we have run up as high on the gamut of joy as any human hearts can go, and if we are melancholy, what

a deal of joy there must be in the world! What happy people other people must be if we are melancholy! I know that many of God's saints can say that when they can lay hold upon the great doctrines of sovereign grace, they are as happy as the day is long in midsummer; so that with all their trials, they can rejoice in the Lord and again and again rejoice. I saw a Baptist minister this week, who was "passing rich on 40 pounds a year," owing no man anything. I told him I hoped he would not die with the secret, for I should like to learn the art of keeping house on 40 pounds a year. But he said to me, when I smiled at his salary, "You see before you the happiest man out of heaven." And I know I did, too, for his face showed that he meant what he said. The happiest man out of heaven—a poor Baptist minister on forty pounds a year!

Yes, and there are some here who can declare, though they are nothing but poor work girls, and have to stitch, stitch, stitch, far into the night to get their living, yet when they think that Christ is their own Beloved, they are the happiest girls out of heaven! Some of you have not much to spare when the rent is paid and food is bought, yet with all that, you want no man's pity, for you are rich to all the intents of bliss! When Mr. Hone, who wrote the *"Everyday Book,"* was traveling through Wales—he was an infidel—he stopped at a cottage to ask for a drink of water. A little girl said, "Oh yes, sir, I have no doubt mother will give you some milk. Come in." He went in and sat down. The little girl was reading her Bible. Mr. Hone said, "Well, my little girl, you are getting your task?" "No, sir, I am not," she replied, "I am reading the Bible." "Yes," he said, "you are getting your task out of the Bible?" "Oh, no," she replied, "it is no task to read the Bible, I love the Bible." "And why do you love the Bible?" he asked. Her simple, childlike answer was, "I thought everybody loved the Bible." She thought full sure it was the greatest treat in the entire world, and fancied that



everybody else was delighted to read God's Word. Mr. Hone was so touched with the sincerity of that expression, that he read the Bible himself, and instead of being an opponent to the things of God, came to be a friend of divine truth! Let us, in the same way, show to the people of the world who think our religion to be slavery, that it is a delight and a joy, that it is no more a burden to us to pray than it is for fish to swim, that it is no more bondage for us to serve God than for a bird to fly. True godliness is our natural element now that we have a new nature given us by the Spirit of God. On that matter, be you witnesses for God!

Another point in dispute refers to the moral tendencies of Christianity, and especially of that form of Christianity which it is our delight to preach. There is a growing belief, nowadays, that the preaching of the doctrines of free grace, have a tendency to make men think little of sin, and that especially the free invitations of the gospel to the very vilest of sinners, and the declaration that, who believes in Jesus shall be saved, has a tendency to make men indulge in the worst of crimes. I read a paper the other day in which a public writer had the impudence to lay the crimes of Southey and Pritchard, and such men, at the door of our holy religion. I called the writer a villain, and he deserves no better name. He must be a villain, to dare to lay, at the door of Christ's holy gospel, the infamy of murder. He says that while we continue to preach that God forgives sin so easily, men will sin more and more. Now our testimony is, and we speak positively here, that there can be nothing which exerts so sanctifying an influence upon the heart of man, as the doctrine of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And if you seek proofs, look around. If it were right for you to speak, my brethren, there are certain happy ones among us who could testify this day, "We are living manifestations that the grace of God can turn the drunk into a sober man, and make the harlot

a Christian woman—and bring up the depraved and the profane to seek after purity and holiness.” Why, we are each of us, in our degree, witnesses to that. When do you hate sin most? Why, at the foot of the cross! And when do you love holiness best? Is it not when you feel that God has blotted out your sins like a cloud? No truth of God can so subdue the human mind, as the majesty of infinite love. It is just that which makes a man hate himself for having offended against so tender and gracious a God. Prove by the integrity and uprightness of your characters, that the gospel has had a mighty power on you, to make you honest, benevolent, devout, loving your neighbor and your God!

Again, it has been whispered—no, it has been boasted, by certain very profound philosophers—that the Christian religion has reached its prime, and though it had an influence upon the world at one time, *it is now going down*, and we need something a little more juvenile and vigorous, with a fresher vigor in its veins to stir the world and produce noble deeds. I have been told many times that the simple preaching of the doctrines of grace, has no effect now upon the thinking portion of the community, the gentlemen who say this being, themselves, the thinking portion of the community in their own estimation—for you must understand that in order to be one of the “thinking portion of the community,” it is necessary not to think in a straight line, but to think in a kind of circumbendibus—to think in a style in which nobody else can understand! It is necessary that you think till you get at the bottom of things and stir the mud, so that you cannot find your own way, and nobody else can see where you are. That is considered to be thinking nowadays—whereas, it strikes me that the best form of thinking is that which submits itself to God’s thoughts, and is willing to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Now is the time, however, for true believers to vindicate the manliness and force of their faith. It is not true that Christianity has lost its force and its power; and we must make this clear as noonday. You are God's witnesses, my brethren; you are put in the box, and I pray, if in the past or present, you have not proven this, do it in the future. The gospel can now nourish heroes as it did of old—it could furnish martyrs tomorrow, if martyrs were required to garnish Smithfield's stakes; it produces *now* self-denying missionaries; it educates men and women by the thousands who can bear the sneer and the jeer, and who would be prepared to lie in a prison, till the moss grew on their sooner, than give up Christ. Our belief is that Christ has the dew of His youth, and that the gospel is as adapted to the boasted enlightenment of the 19th Century, as to the darkness of the first ages. But you are God's witnesses, and you must prove it, and I must ask every one of you to prove it by the holy zeal, the conspicuous enthusiasm, the sacred fire and fervor, that shall blaze and flash in your lives. For truth and for Christ let us teach this world that we retain the old power among us; let us ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to live such forceful vigorous lives, that men shall know once more what we can do. Indeed, I am not boastful in venturing to say that there are still a host of facts to prove that the gospel has not lost its power over the minds of men. We can point to spots in Glasgow, London, Edinburgh—in the most crowded of our cities where once there were dens of infamy, and haunts of vice, and there, by the enterprising benevolence and holy perseverance of single, solitary men, the desert has been made to blossom as the rose! But enough of this; go, each man, witness in his own person!

Once again—it is our daily business to be witnesses for God on another question, as *to whether or not faith in the blood of*

*Jesus Christ really can give calm and peace to the mind.* Our hallowed peace must be proof of that.

The last testimony we shall probably bear will answer the question, *whether Christ can help a man to die well or not*; whether religion will bear the test of that last solemn article; whether we shall be enabled to go through the river either triumphantly shouting, or quietly accepting our end. Well, beloved, we will prove that when the time comes; but how many there have been among us, whose names we venerate, who have died rejoicing in the love of Jesus. There are those above whom we mention with a joyous sorrow, when we recollect how well to the last they testified of the faithfulness of Christ and His power to bless, when all other blessings fail us.

You see, then, that there are many questions in dispute, and that the Christian's business is to be God's witness, speaking the truth for God upon these matters.

**II.** Time flies, and therefore I must take you on to the second point, which is to give **SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE MODE OF WITNESSING.**

Let me say, as a first suggestion, that you *must* witness—you must witness if you are a Christian. You may try to shirk it if you will, but you must witness, for you are *sub poena*—that is to say, you will suffer for it if you do not. Some Christians think they will sneak comfortably into heaven without bearing witness for Christ. I fear they will be mistaken; and this I know, that every Christian, who does not come out distinctly and boldly for his Master, will lose all choice enjoyments. He may have enough religion to make him wretched, but he shall have none of the joy and peace, the exhilaration and delight, which a greater boldness and faithfulness would have given him. The bravest Christians are the happiest Christians; those who serve God most have the most enjoyment—and those Nicodemites, who come to Christ by night, generally find it night. Christian,

do not shun witnessing for Christ. After the disgraceful defeat of the Romans at the battle of Allia, Rome was sacked, and it seemed as if at any moment the Gauls might take the capitol. Among the garrison was a young man of the Fabian family, and on a certain day the anniversary of a sacrifice returned—when his family had always offered sacrifice upon the Quirinal Hill. This hill was in the possession of the Gauls, but when the morning dawned, the young man took the sacred utensils of his god, went down from the capitol, passed through the Gallic sentries—through the main body, up the hill—offered sacrifice, and came back unharmed. It was always told as a wonder among Roman legends. I think this is just what the Christian should do when there is something to be done for Christ—though he is a solitary man in the midst of a thousand opponents—let him, at the precise moment when duty calls, fearless of all danger, go straight to the appointed spot. Let him do his duty, and remember that consequences belong to God and not to us. I pray God that after this style we may witness for Christ.

In the next place, *every witness is required to speak the truth of God, the whole truth and nothing but the truth*. Christian, as a witness for God, do this. Speak the truth, and let your life be true as well as your words. Live so that you need not be afraid to have the shutters taken down—that men may look right through your actions. You are not true if you have any sinister motive or anything to conceal. Speak in your life the truth of God, and let it be the whole truth, too. Proclaim for God all the truth as it is in Jesus, and let your life proclaim the whole teaching of truth. Let it be nothing but the truth. I am afraid many Christians tell a great deal which is not true—their life is contrary to their words; and though they speak the truth of God with their lips, they speak lies with their hands. Suppose, for instance, I draw a miserable face, and I say, “God’s people

are a blessed people.” Nobody believes me because my face tells a lie, while my mouth utters a truth! And if I say, “Yes, religion has a sanctifying influence upon its professors and possessors,” and put my hand into my neighbor’s pocket in any sort of way, who will believe my testimony? I may have spoken the truth of God, but I am also speaking something that is not the truth, and I am thus rendering my witness of very small effect.

When the witness is before the court, *his direct evidence is always the best*. If a man can only say, “I heard somebody say,” the judge will frequently stop him, and say, “We do not want hearsay evidence. What did you *see*?” Many professing Christians only give witness of what they have read in books; they have no vital, experiential acquaintance with the things of God. Now remember, dear friends, that second-hand Christianity is one of the worst things in the world. We do not like it as we see it in the Church of England; we do not believe in that sponsorial salvation, in which one man promises for another that he shall keep all God’s holy commandments, to be anything better than a lying pretense. The same is true of any form of religion which you may happen to have—which you borrow from your mother, or take from your father, or gather from good books. True religion is more than what we can teach or learn; it is something that must be known and felt; and your witness for God is not worth the words in which you utter it, unless it comes from your own experience of its truth.

*A witness must take care not to damage his own case.* How many professed witnesses for God make very telling witnesses the other way? They damage their case by either retaining a part of the truth, or else by flatly contradicting, as we have said before, in their lives what they have professed. Do not let it be so! As a witness for God, be careful that every action speaks for His glory—yes, and that every thought, and word, and deed, shall

be such witnessing, as you shall wish to have borne in the day when the Great Judge shall call you to account.

*Every witness must expect to be cross-examined.* “He that is first in his own cause,” says Solomon, “seems just; but his neighbor comes and searches him.” You know how a counsel takes a man and turns him inside out—and though he was one color before—he looks quite another directly afterwards. Now you, as God’s witnesses, will be cross-examined. Watch, therefore, watch carefully. Temptation will be put in your way—the devil will cross-examine you. You say you love God—he will set carnal joys before you, and see whether you cannot be decoyed from your love to God. You said you trusted in your heavenly Father—providence will cross-examine you. A trial will dash upon you; how is it now? Can you trust Him? You said religion was a joyous thing; a crushing misfortune will befall you. How is it now? Can you now rejoice when the fig tree does not blossom, and the flocks are cut off, and the cattle are dead? Can you now rejoice in God as before? By this species of examination true men will be made manifest, and the deceiver will be detected. What cross-examinations did the martyrs go through? What fiery questions had they to answer? What cutting cross-examinations would be the sword, the rack, the spear, the prison, the banishment? And yet you know how faithfully they witnessed, still standing fast to the truth of God even to the end. What a noble sight is Martin Luther when under trial; his friends said to him, “Luther, you will never think of going to Worms, will you? Why the cardinal will burn you as they did John Huss.” “Ah,” he said, “but if they were to make a fire so big that it would reach from Wurttemberg to Worms, and should flame up to heaven, in the Lord’s name I would go through it to declare the truth of God before the council. I would enter between the jaws of Behemoth! I would break his teeth, and would confess Jesus Christ.” Thus Luther was

proved to be the true man of God, and his witness for God moved the world in his own time, and is moving it now. May we all be able to stand the test of such cross-examinations.

**III. Did you observe in the text, dear friends, that **THERE IS ANOTHER WITNESS BESIDE YOU?****

“You are My witnesses, and My *servant* whom I have chosen.” Who is that? Why the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ! If you want an exposition of who this servant is, turn to the Philippians and read these words—“Who took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Witnesses for God are never alone. When they seem alone, there is still One with them whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace with the three holy children—“The fourth is like unto the Son of God.” “Fear not,” Christ may well say to all His faithful witnesses, “I am with you, the faithful and true Witness.”

Let us remark, concerning Christ's life, that He witnessed the truth of God, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you want to have a witness to every attribute of God, only read the four evangelists, and there you have it. Beloved, would you see God's *truth*? Observe how Jesus Christ, in all His actions—with a sacred simplicity, with a transparent sincerity—writes His heart out in His every act. Here you have no sophistry, no Jesuitical reservation—He lives out His life—His own heart, and the heart of God. What testimony you have to God's holiness in the life of Christ. In Him was no sin. “The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me.” Read that divine book, “The life of Christ,” through and through and through—you shall find nothing to be put at the end by way of addendum, much less anything by way of errata. It is all there, and there is nothing there but what ought to be!



What witness-bearing, too, there is in the life of Christ to *divine justice*. See Him sweating great drops of blood; mark His face marred with a multitude of sorrows, see His brow crowned with thorns, and decked with ruby drops of His own blood. Read in His hands and in His feet the terrible writing of divine vengeance; look into His side, and see there the sacred mystery of God's hatred for sin—a hatred so deep that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him because of sin! Never could there be a clearer witness than the bleeding Jesus, of God's hatred to sin!

Above all, read Christ's witness to God's love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In every action of the life of Jesus—from the time when He lay in Bethlehem's manger, to the moment when a cloud received Him out of their sight—it is all LOVE! Elijah brings fire from heaven to destroy—Christ sends it in Pentecost to bless. He opens His mouth at the first with—"Blessed, blessed, blessed,"—for so He multiplied that word on the mount where He preached His first sermon and He closed His earthly sojourn by blessing His people. His paths dropped fatness. No imagination can picture love more deep and pure than that which is reflected in the life of Jesus Christ.

I cannot, however, detain you this morning to show that the entire circumference of divine excellence is contained in the life of Christ—that every pearl of Deity is in the crown which we call Jesus. There is not time to show that He contains in Himself a full declaration of all that the Father is, so that His words are true—"He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Brethren, you are to be witnesses for Christ, and Christ is to be a witness *with* you. If you want to know how to discharge your duty, look at Him—He is always witnessing—by the well of Samaria, and the Temple of Jerusalem; by the Lake of

Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day! His mighty prayers are as vocal to God as His daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth; that fox, Herod, cannot frighten or alarm Him; even before Pilate, He witnesses a good confession—He witnesses so clearly and distinctly that there is no mistaking Him. The common people heard Him gladly, for among other reasons, that no dark, unintelligible jargon concealed His meaning.

Beloved, make your lives clear. Be as the brook where you may see every stone at the bottom—not as the muddy creek of which you only see the surface—but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man, may be distinctly visible to all. You need not tell men that you love them—make them *feel* that you love them. You need not say, “I am true,”—be true. Boast not of integrity, but *be* upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Let me beg of you to never, for fear of feeble man, hold back your witness. Never put the finger of shame after this style to your lips. Those lips have been warmed with a coal from off the divine altar—let them speak like heaven-touched lips. “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand.” Watch not the clouds; consult not the wind; in season and out of season still witness for the Lord, and if it shall ever come to pass that for Christ's sake and the gospel you shall have to be like Naphthali—a people that hazarded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field—then blush not, but rejoice in the honor this conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer loss for Christ's sake, for then your suffering shall be a pulpit for you! Your losses and persecutions shall make you a platform from which the more vigorously, and with greater power, you shall proclaim your witness for Christ Jesus!

Gird up your loins, my brethren, and go out from this assembly asking, “Am I God’s witness? Then, Lord, open my lips that I may speak with decision and power, and give me grace that my witness-bearing shall be such that I shall not be ashamed when the reporting angel shall read the whole of it before assembled worlds.” The Holy Spirit is needed for this—may He dwell in us, and make our bodies His temple, and so make each of us witness for Christ.

Remember, this sermon has nothing to do with many of you. You cannot witness for Christ, for you do not know Him. You cannot witness for Him till you have trusted Him. O, you who are out of Christ, let my witness to you this morning be this—that unless you seek Him, you will perish, but that if you seek Him, He will be found of you! May the Lord grant you grace to find Him now, and His shall be the glory. Amen.

# 645 THE BLIND MAN'S EARNEST CRIES – MARK 10:47-48

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 20th, 1865,  
by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me.”  
— Mark 10:47-48

WHEREVER *Jesus Christ is found, His presence is marvelously mighty*. The disciples, when Christ was absent, were like sheep without a shepherd. They were foiled in argument, and even defeated in attempted miracles; but as soon as our Savior made His appearance among them, they returned to their strength. When a valiant general suddenly hastens to the rescue of his routed troops, the sound of his horse hoofs reassures the trembling, and the sound of his voice transforms each coward into a hero. May the glorious Captain of our salvation show Himself in the midst of our churches, and there will be a joyous shout along our ranks. You will have no need to exchange ministers, or to wish for a better class of Christians—the same officers, and the same soldiers will suffice to win splendid victories. If Jesus is present, the men will be so changed, that you will scarcely know them. They shall be filled with power from on high, and do great exploits in His name and by His

strength; nor does the divine energy of His presence confine itself to those who are already disciples of the Savior; but strangers, neighbors, wayfarers, and even blind beggars feel the effect of His nearness. This sightless beggar hears the good news that Jesus of Nazareth passes by, and straightway he begins to pray. My brethren, there shall be no lack of praying hearts where there is a present Savior. If there are no conversions in the congregation, it must be because Christ is not dwelling there by His Spirit. You have grieved Him, and He is gone; you have forgotten Him, and He has left you, so that you may come to know your own weakness and learn to glorify His power in the future. If the Lord shall graciously return to His Church, cries of penitents will be frequent, and the songs of those who have found peace by faith in Him shall go up to heaven in blessed chorus. Oh, that the Lord Jesus would appear among the churches of this our age!

We have much to mourn over. Infidelity audaciously seats itself in the chief seats of the synagogue. Romanism secretly eats out the very vitals of our national religion; broad and liberal views act as a moth upon gospel doctrine; inconsistency of life dishonors the profession of practical godliness. O Lord, how long, how long! If the Lord Jesus shall graciously work by His Spirit among us, we shall soon have our languishing churches revived; errors will fly, as the bats and owls betake themselves to their hiding places when the sun arises; and every sweet flower of Christian grace shall yield its blessed perfume under the genial influences of His celestial rays. I thank God we have had Jesus *here*. We have often been able to say, "The Son of David passes by." He is still here. Believing hearts who recognize His presence and lament when He is absent, tell us that they often find Him sweetly manifested to them here in the preaching of the Word, in the breaking of bread, and in the fellowship of prayer. He is here now; but oh, we want to

recognize His presence more fully; we want to see the divine influences, like streams from Lebanon, refreshing all our garden; we desire to see Jesus working more effectually in making poor sinners feel their need of Him, and drawing them to Himself.

*Providence at all times co-works with divine grace in the salvation of the chosen people.* You have an instance of it here. It was providence which brought the blind man where grace brought Jesus Christ. The Lord might have been passing by, but if this blind man had not happened to live at Jericho—or if at that particular moment, he had not been pursuing his avocation of begging, just on the particular road along which the Savior marched—he would never have heard that Jesus passed by! Consequently, he would never have cried out to Him, and never have obtained the necessary cure. Providence brings sinners under the hearing of the Word, and moves the preacher to select topics suitable to their minds. Providence prepares them, as the plow prepares the soil, and grace guides the minister's mind to act as the hand which throws the wheat broadcast over the field. I am thankful for many of you, that you are here this morning, for I know that, "Jesus passes by." And though it may be that you are still without the heavenly light of God, it is a circumstance for which you ought to thank God that many have here received sight from the Lord Jesus. It may be a singular providence which induced you to come here at all—I pray it may prove to be the white horse on which Christ rides forth, conquering and to conquer—that He may win a victory in your souls now. Permit me, however, to remind you that such a circumstance involves responsibility. Jesus passes by—the blind man sits by the wayside—if he does not cry, his blindness will, therefore, continue; and there will be an addition to all its gloom in the thought that he did not use the one means within his reach, namely, that of crying to the

Physician for healing. Remember *your* responsibility, anxious sinner, and ask God to give you, now, divine grace to improve the flying hour, and may His Spirit lead you to imitate the example of the blind man, and cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

I. Coming directly to the case before us, let us observe **THE BLIND MAN’S EARNESTNESS AS A CONTRAST** with the behavior of many hearers of the Word.

It was a very short sermon that was preached to him. He heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. He heard nothing more. I do not know that he understood doctrine—that he knew precisely why Jesus Christ came into the world. He could not have explained the system of theology; he had never had a clear and distinct statement of divine grace laid down before him. All he had heard was that, “Jesus of Nazareth passes by.” But that short sermon led him to prayer. Beloved, what a contrast between him and some of you! You have been sermonized until you must well near be sermon-weary. You have heard the truth of God till probably, in theory, there are none better instructed than you are. You know the precious doctrines of truth, so far as the killing letter is concerned, but you have never yet been led to pray; or, if the prayer has come, it has never been that earnest, heaven-piercing cry which will not be refused—“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” It has not been the passionate prayer of your spirit. How many there are who listen to me so often, that I fear I shall never be God’s instrument of salvation to them. It is so easy for you to get used to one voice till that which once was shrill as the note of a clarion, becomes like the buzzing of a bee in your ears—you get tired of it—you sleep under it as a miller sleeps while his mill is going, because it makes no sound to which he is not accustomed. My figures and illustrations you have heard; my tones of pleading you well know; my words of exhortation you can probably repeat by

heart; and some of you are no more affected by 12 years of earnest effort than a piece of marble might be affected by 12 years of pouring oil along its hard unmelting surface.

It is a melancholy reflection, that instead of praying over sermons, *many amuse themselves with them*—that which costs us many a prayer and many a tear is of no further worth to them than giving an opportunity for exhibiting their critical abilities. I have not to complain of any hard criticisms from you; you kindly approve of my poorest endeavors, and accept my feeblest words. I almost wish that some of you did not! Oh, that you would but kick against the truth of God! Then I might have some hope for you, but alas for that indifference which makes you receive it all as a matter of course, and praise the style, and say you are thankful that the preacher is bold and honest with you, and thus, the whole thing ends in your having complimented me without having sought my Master's favor. Oh, my hearer, we have something else to seek beside your good words. If you would hate *us*, we could not regret it if you would but love your own souls; but if you love us and listen to our voice with respect, and nevertheless choose the downward path, and go on to your own destruction, how can the preacher be content? Shall he go to his bed and remember that hundreds of you will dwell in everlasting burnings, and can never have a portion among the glorified spirits in heaven? Can he go to his bed and say, "It does not matter, they are pleased with me, and I am unto them as one who makes a sweet sound upon a goodly instrument"? Oh, I would God that instead of this you were brought like this poor blind man to go from hearing to praying, from your pews to your closets, from listening to me to communing with God, and seeking mercy at His hands.

You will say that you cannot fairly be classed in this category, for under the preaching of the Word *you have been led occasionally to pray*. Yes, and I do remember well when I myself



was led to pray by hearing the Word; but what of it? The prayers of Sunday were forgotten in the sins of Monday, and the anxieties of Sunday were dissipated in the pleasures of the week. It is so with some of you. You pray when a sermon has been especially earnest—when the arrows of God wound you, you weep and you promise amendment, and a thousand fine things; you even dream of flying to Christ and taking hold upon the horns of the blood-sprinkled altar. But yet it is not done. You have made enough resolutions to pave the road to hell; you have piled up enough of your own professions to condemn you to an everlasting insolvency for bills dishonored, and for debts unpaid. Oh, would God you had *done* with resolving and re-resolving—with these transient and temporary feelings! And oh, that these things would go right through your heart, leaving such wounds as none but Christ is able to heal. Oh, for the effectual work of God the Holy Spirit! What is the value of the cloud of the morning which flies before the gale, or the smoke of the chimney which is gone with the first puff? For eternity, you need something more lasting than the morning dew; something more substantial than chimney smoke. O may the divine Spirit build you with His own right hand upon that good foundation—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! The blind beggar, with but one sermon, and that exceedingly brief, never leaves off praying till Christ grants him his desire—may God give you also to pray in earnest, lest you be sent to hell in earnest.

This poor man began to cry *for himself*, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy *on me!*” And we cannot bring men to hear for themselves. They will say, “I hope that sermon which was so appropriate to my friend will have a beneficial effect on him.” You will think of those in the opposite gallery—your hearts will remember some sitting down below. Oh, mind yourselves! Yourselves! Yourselves! Another man’s salvation is, of course, desirable—but what will it be to you that he should be in

Abraham's bosom, if you are with the rich man in the flames? Your own soul is that which you have to look to first; self-preservation is a law of nature—be not disobedient to it! May grace put such force into it, that from this day you will say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy *on me!*" I confess to you that I could not read this passage without feeling the deepest and most humiliating feeling, to think that the mere report should have been so blessed to that man, and that year after year, we should have given forth a much more full report of Christ Jesus, and yet have to say of many of you, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" I would God I could lay this more to my heart, and that you laid it more to your hearts, for, after all, it is more your concern than mine whether you are saved or not. The preacher is responsible for the faithfulness of his preaching, but hearers also are responsible for the earnestness of their hearing. May God grant that your responsibility may not prove to be a millstone about your necks to sink you to the nethermost hell.

**II. Passing onwards, we notice this man's intense DESIRE AS AN ABSORBING PASSION.**

There are many excuses which men make for themselves why they should not seek their soul's salvation just now. A very common one is, "*I am a very poor man*"; religion is for the gentle folks, for people who have time to spare—it is of no use to a working man." This person was a beggar. His position in life was far less honorable than yours; but, though a beggar, he desired that his eyes might be opened. And you, who are superior in your position to him, you ought not to make the lowness of your estate an excuse for not seeking the salvation of your souls. Where did that lie first come from—the lie that the religion of Christ is not for the poor? Is it because so many of our sanctuaries are gorgeous in architecture? Is it because it is usual on Sunday, and very properly so, for people to put on

their best clothes? And does the working man think that, therefore, he would not be welcome because he happens to be out of work, or has not a good suit of black to put on? Then, by all means, let us break down this prejudice, and show to the working man that he is welcome here. I have often noticed you give a seat to a navigator or to a laborer in a smock frock when you have left very respectable people to stand in the aisles, and I do not blame you for it; well-dressed people may be less fatigued than those who have been toiling all week. I admire the choice you make because I hope it will go to prove that the working man is not a speckled bird among us. Why, it is all nonsense because we see a congregation well and respectably dressed to think that they must all necessarily belong to the upper classes. A certain preacher said to me the other day, “You preach to the rich, I preach to the poor.” Now, this was from lack of knowing better. We have, I am happy to say, some rich among us, whose princely gifts enable us to do much for the Lord’s work, but still our great multitude is made up of the genuine working class. They are not a sanctimonious, whining lot who will go about begging of everybody, and therefore dress shabbily; no, they are sober, saving people, and therefore, for the most part, lift themselves out of the ditch of absolute poverty into manly independence.

The religion of Christ not for the poor man? Why, above all men, these are those who need it; and while the religion of Christ appeals to all ranks, if there is ever a preference given, it is the boast of the gospel of Christ, that “the poor have the gospel preached to them.” Now, do I have the ear of any man who has talked in that way and said, “It is all very well for gentlemen and so on”? Well, do not go and say that again, because you know it is not true! *You know it is not true!* We can give you thousands of instances where the religion of Jesus Christ blesses the cottage as much as ever it could bless the

palace, and is found quite as useful to the laborer who has to toil from morning to night as to, “My Lady,” who has next to nothing to do, if she does not do something in the cause of Jesus Christ. Now, get rid of that excuse!

Well, but this beggar might have said, “*I must stick to my business.*” His business was begging, and though Jesus Christ might be passing by, he might very reasonably have said, “I really have no time to attend to this gentleman, whoever he may be. His preaching may be all very well and good, but I must beg right on, for when I get home there is little enough in my hat, and I really cannot afford the time to attend to this gentleman.” That is what many people say—“Really, our business occupies all our time. We have to be always at it, early in the morning, almost before the sun is risen, and late at night, till we are much too tired to read a book or to pray.” Ah, but you see, this man forgot his begging to find his eyesight; and you might well forget your trading to find your soul’s sight. If it were worthwhile to neglect his begging to have his eyes opened, it were worthwhile, even if it were necessary, to neglect your business if you might but find Christ! Though, mark you, I do not believe that any man need neglect his lawful calling on account of religion.

Bartimaeus might have said, “I cannot attend to Jesus Christ now, *for it is the height of the season.*” You see a beggar’s season always is when plenty of people are about, and as Jesus had brought a crowd with Him, the beggar might very justly have said, “Why, if I do not beg now, it is of no use begging at any other time! I have a call of providence to stick to my begging just now. I must attend to getting my eyes opened, if they can be opened, at some future time. Just now, I must make hay while the sun shines.” This is your style of talking. “Look! I am so very busy just now; providence has put a good thing in my way and I must stick to it; I cannot be supposed to go out

week nights to hear sermons, and I cannot spare time for prayer. I need every moment that I can possibly get to make money, for now is my time; when I get old, and can get a house in the country, I may then rest and attend to divine things.” Ah, you simpleton! Here is a man who flings away the golden opportunity of gleaning money of the multitudes, to seek his sight! And yet you are such a simpleton that you will not leave your gains to think of your eternal state.

He might have made yet other excuses if he would. For instance, he might have said, “Well, suppose I do get my eyes opened; *then I shall not be as well-fitted for my trade as I now am*,” for a blind beggar gets twice as much as a man who can see. And it is rather a qualification to a beggar to have no eyes. Some of you feel, “If I had my soul saved, I could not trade as I now do; I know I should have to shut up that gin palace; I could not be the nurse of drunkenness, and yet call myself a Christian.” “I could not stand at that bar,” said a young woman to me, who had been serving at one of the gin palaces. “The Lord had met with me, I did serve a few nights, but I could not stand it. I could not serve glasses of gin and then go to the communion table—that would never do.” There are some who are afraid to think about religion, because it will disqualify them for their business—and a blessed disqualification, too—may the Lord disqualify thousands for the accursed work. But oh, if this man could well give up his poor trade of beggary to pray for his eyes, you may well give up your wicked trade, if your souls may but enter heaven! If you should lose the entire world, you have lost next to nothing if you have gained eternity!

I am amazed this man did not make the well-known excuse, “I do not know whether I am predestinated to have my eyes opened; because if I am to have my eyes opened, they will be opened, and if I am not to have my eyes opened, they will not be opened. So I shall sit still here, and hold my hat and beg.

That is the main chance! I shall hold my hat and stick to my trade!” I think that every man who uses this last excuse knows within himself that he is talking nonsense. I cannot believe in a rational man standing upright and saying, “If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, and therefore I shall not pray.” I believe that man is a sneak; he is trying to make himself believe what he knows is not true. He knows very well that he does not say that kind of thing in business—“If I am to make 20 pounds, I shall make 20 pounds, and so I shall not take down the shutters tomorrow. If I am to have a harvest, I shall have a harvest, and so I shall not plow this year.” He never does anything of the kind ordinarily, and yet he pretends he is such an idiot that he must throw away his soul because of the doctrine of predestination! Brethren, if a man means to hang himself, he can always find a piece of rope; and if a man means to damn himself, he can always find an excuse; and this excuse about predestination is one to which those run who are greater fools or knaves than ordinary. This man made no excuse of any sort about his family, or his trade, or predestination, but he just cried out with emotion—“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

**III.** We turn, now, to **NOTICE HIS ZEAL**, and observe that it was **A MOST REASONABLE ZEAL**. It appears, according to the Greek, that this man had a good voice, or, at least, made the most of it. He did not sit and whisper, “Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me,” but he *shouted*, and, as the opposition increased, his shouts grew yet louder, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” He was zealous and persevering in his prayer, but his zeal was justified. He was blind and *he knew the misery of blindness*. There are unutterable woes connected with it, and it needs much grace to make a man content when his eyes are closed to the light of day. This poor soul could not be content while there was a chance of a cure. But yours, sinner,

is spiritual blindness, the blindness which does not let you see yourself or see your Savior, the blindness which shuts out all spiritual joys from your eyes, and will shut out the joys of heaven eternally from you, and condemn you to wander hopelessly in the blackness of darkness forever. However awfully earnest your prayers may be, they cannot be too earnest. *He was a beggar, and had doubtless learned the weakness of man.* He had often gone home with nothing when he had expected that his bag would be filled. And you, too, you are a beggar; you have tried your own works, and found them worthless. You have begged at the door of ceremonies, and you have found them to be an empty show; you have trusted first to one thing of man's invention, and then another, but after all your begging, you still need heavenly alms to make you rich—you are naked and poor and miserable.

Now, considering the weakness of man, and that Christ alone has power to save you, if your prayer should become as terribly earnest, even as the shrieks of lost souls, it would be fully justified, for yours is an urgent pressing case. *The beggar knew, moreover, that Jesus Christ was near,* and when Jesus Christ is near, there is much cause for earnest prayer. If Jesus would not listen, if it were not a season of mercy, if grace were not being distributed plentifully, you might be excused from praying; but oh, when it is a season of revival, when you are in the place where Jesus blesses souls, when you listen to a ministry which God has honored, then let your cry be more zealous than it ever has been! This poor man felt it was *now or never with him*; if he did not get his eyes opened that day, they might never be opened. Christ was passing by then, and He might never pass that way again. Oh, sinner, it may be now or never with YOU! I know that God saves men at the 11th hour, but I also know that there are many who are *not* saved at the 11th hour—and that after such-and-such an hour has struck, many are given up

to hardness of heart, permitted to be their own destroyers, without any checks of conscience or of the Holy Spirit— and such may be your case. The ticking of the clock always cries to men who know how to interpret its meaning. “Now, or never! Now, or never! Today on earth; tomorrow in eternity!” If you would have Christ, the only time to seek Him is today. “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” “For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” The beggar felt this, and therefore up went the cry, louder and yet louder, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

*He guessed at least something of the value of sight.* He had heard what others told him of the happiness of gazing upon the landscape, the field, the flood, the sky. He longed to look into the face of friends, and to know his own parents, or his own children by sight. Well might he, if he guessed the value of his eyesight, cry most mightily. Sinner, you have at least a guess of the happiness of pardon! You have at least some idea of the sweetness of justification! You know, for you have often been told, that eternal life is well worth your seeking. Oh, may the Holy Spirit stir your heart, this morning, till you can no longer keep back the cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” I say, if you think of the dreadfulness of his present state, of the hope which the presence of Christ afforded him, and of the blessedness which he might expect from restored eyesight, he had good reasons for being zealous. And, sinner, if you will think of the wrath of God abiding on you now—of the future with all its array of terror—and if you will remember the power of Christ to save, and the eternal blessedness of being safe in Him, all these things, and especially the shortness of time and the present necessity of your case, should move you to cry yet more and more earnestly, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”



**IV.** Let us pass on to a fourth point—**THIS MAN EXPERIENCED OBSTACLES IN HIS PRAYER**, and this is *a very common affliction*.

John Bunyan tells us, that right by the wicket gate, Diabolus had a castle, and from this castle, he used to shoot at all who sought an entrance. Moreover, he kept a big dog which always barked and howled and sought to devour every person who knocked at the gate of mercy. I am sure that is true. Whenever a sinner gets to mercy's gate and begins knocking, that noise is heard in hell, and straightway, Satan endeavors to drive the poor wretch away from the gate of hope. In olden times, when the Algerian pirates took many Christian prisoners, they chained them to the oars of their galleys to row their masters. When Christian ships of war were seen in the distance, the captives knew that there was a hope of their being liberated; but their masters would come on deck and cry, "Pull for your lives," and the whip was laid on to make these poor captives fly, by their efforts, from their own rescue. This is what the devil does. He gets sinners to tug at the oar, and whenever Christ, with His blood-red flag of liberty is seen within hail, the sinner exerts himself to the utmost to get out of Christ's way. If that does not suffice, Satan will employ sometimes bad men and sometimes good men to stop the sinner from seeking a Savior at all. You know the ways in which *the world* will try to make a crying sinner hold his peace. The world will tell him that he is crying out about a matter that does not matter, for the Bible is not true. There is no God, no heaven, no hell, and no hereafter. But if God has set you crying, sinner, I know you will not be stopped with that—you will cry yet the more exceedingly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then the world will try pleasure. You will be invited to the theater. You will be attracted from one ballroom to another, but if the Lord put the cry in your mouth, the intense anguish of your

spirit will not be satisfied by the noise of violins, or by the shouts of them who make merry. Perhaps the world will call you a fool to be vexed about such things; you are melancholy and have got the mopes. They will tell you that you will soon go where many others have gone—to Bedlam; but if once God has made you cry, you will not be stopped by a fool's laughter. The agonizing prayer will go up in secret, "Have mercy on me."

Perhaps the world will try its cares. You will be called into more business; you will get a prosperity which will not make your soul prosper; and so it will be hoped by Satan that you will forget Christ in accumulated wealth, and growing cares. But ah, if this is such a cry as I hope it is, poor anxious sinner, you will not be stopped by that. Then the world will pretend to look down upon you with pity. Ah, poor creature, you are being misled, when you are being led to Christ and to heaven. They will say you have become the dupe of some fanatic, when, in truth, you are now coming to your senses, and estimating eternal things at their proper value. Yes, but the worst is that even *the disciples of Christ* will act as these did in this narrative—they will charge you to, "Hold your peace." Some professors have no sympathy with anxious souls. Much mischief is done by the light and frothy conversation of Christian professors, especially on Sunday. How often sermons are blunted by a spirit of quibbling! I have heard of a woman who prayed for her husband's conversion very earnestly, and one day, after the sermon, as she was walking home, she was speaking to her friend and pulling the sermon to pieces! The doctrine did not quite suit her taste. Her husband looked at her with wonder—that sermon had broken his heart, and yet here was a woman quibbling at the very truth which God had blessed to give her the desire of her heart! I do not doubt that Christian people, by their unprofitable criticisms upon ministrations which God has blessed, may mar the good work, and be the instruments in the

hands of Satan of urging poor sinners to cease their cry. But oh, poor soul let neither saint nor sinner make you stop. If you have begun to pray, though you have cried for months, and no sweet answer of mercy has come, cry more loudly. Oh, be yet more earnest! Take the gates of heaven, and shake them with your zeal as though you would pull them up—post, and bar, and all! Stand at mercy's door, and take no denial. Knock and knock, and knock again, as though you would shake the very spheres, until you obtain an answer to your cries. "The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Cold prayers never win God's ear. Draw your bow with your full strength if you would send your arrow up as high as heaven. He whom God has taught to be resolved to be saved will be saved. He who will not take damnation as his fate, but who feels he must have Christ, is already under the divine operation of the Holy Spirit! Such a man bears the marks of divine election upon his very brow; such a man must and shall obtain everlasting salvation.

**V. I come to the closing point. This MAN'S PERSISTENCE AT LAST BECAME SO MIGHTY THAT REBUFFS BECAME ARGUMENTS WITH HIM.**

"He cried the more a great deal." He took the weapons out of their hands, and used them on his own account. What do you suppose were the arguments that they used to induce him to leave off praying? Would not one of them say, "Hold your tongue, you ragged, filthy beggar! Hold your tongue!" "That is why I will not hold my tongue," says he. "I am such a poor loathsome creature that I have need to cry. You gentlemen, who are better off, have no need to cry as I have; but the worse you prove me to be, the more need I have of the Master's help, and therefore I shall cry the more." The devil says to you, "Do not pray, you are such a sinner." Tell the devil that is the reason why you *will* pray, for being so foul and filthy, these are all

arguments why you, above all others, should cry aloud, “Jesus, have mercy on me.” Then they said, “Why, you have nothing to recommend you! Jesus Christ has not invited you; He has never looked on you with an eye of love; He has never called *you*.” “Then, it is the very reason,” said he, “why *I* should call Him. If I have no love token, then so much the worse for me, and so much the more reason why I should never be happy till I get one. If He has not invited me, then I will cry to Him for an invitation.” You see, the more you can prove that the sinner’s case is hopeless and bad, you have only proved that the sinner has the more reason for prayer. If I am the furthest from hope, why, then, he who needs to be heard, and is a very long way off, must call loudly. He who is further still, must call more loudly still; and he who is furthest off must be the loudest of all—so if I am the furthest off from God and hope, I will only pray with the greater persistence till I do prevail. “Yes, but,” said another of them, “you make such a noise. Be still! You disturb the whole neighborhood.” “Ah,” says he, “I am thankful for that, for now *He* will hear me.”

I think this man, if he had heard the Savior tell the parable about the woman whose perpetual coming wearied the Judge, must have said, “Make a noise, do I? So much the better! Then I will make more, for I see I bother *you*—perhaps I shall weary *Him*, so I will even keep on till the Judge is drawn to grant my request by the very noise I make.” Some tell you, you should not be so earnest; you really disturb your friends; you have become so concerned about your soul that your friends are concerned about your sanity. Tell them you are glad of it, and you mean to be more earnest, for if you have made hard-hearted man *feel*, you will soon make God, who bids us give Him no rest, at last give you the desire of your heart. Then they would say to him, “Now, do not disturb the Savior! He is so busy. He has so much to do. He is preaching now; He is talking

to His disciples.” “Ah, well,” says he, “then if He does so many good things, the more reason why I should cry that He would do *me* a good turn, also.” It is of no use to ask a man to give anything who never gives anything—but the man, who is always giving, always will give. And so, from Christ’s many works, he derives a reason why he should cry. “Is He blessing others, then why not me?” So, dear hearer, when you hear of showers of blessings, ask that they may fall on *you*, and when you know that Christ is saving so many, make that a reason why He should save *YOU*— even you! Then they said, “He is on a journey; He is going to Jerusalem. He cannot be stopped by every beggar. Hold your tongue! When do you think He will ever get there if He is to turn aside to every clamorous beggar who chooses to urge His claim?” “Traveling is He?” said he, “Then I will stop Him now, for if I once let Him go by, I shall never catch Him again. Going to Jerusalem to die! Ah, then my hope will be all over! I have Him now—I will not give Him a chance of going by.” Louder goes up the cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

If the devil tells you, “It is too late!” Then say, “I will go directly. I will not stop. If so many years have passed over my head without my finding a Savior, then every one of these shall be a spur to make me fly like the wind, more swiftly.” It is very likely that they also said to him, “How dare you, a beggar, interrupt such a person as Jesus Christ? Why, He is going in triumph through Jerusalem; He is to ride with solemn pomp all through the streets; how can you think that you are to have an audience with such a great One as He is?” “Great One, is He?” the man seemed to say, “Great One! I need a Great One! A little one will not serve my need; it must be a Great One who can open my eyes, and the greater He is, the more reason why I should cry to Him.” So whenever you are alarmed at the glory and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not be put off

because of that, but rather say, “Is He mighty? Then He is mighty to save. Is He a Savior and a Great One? Then He is just such a Savior as I need; I will never rest, I will never pause till He says unto my soul ‘I am your Salvation.’”

Now, I did solemnly ask God that He would, this morning, excite in some sinner a desire to pray, and that if there were one here who had been praying, and who was tempted to stop, the Word might be blessed by God the Holy Spirit to make him more incessant in his prayer. O may He grant my petition. Remember that the only way in which this praying and this waiting will come to an end, is by looking alone to Jesus Christ. If you turn those eyes of yours away from yourself and your feelings and yes, your prayers, to Jesus Christ’s finished work, and trust Him, you will find peace directly! There is peace to the soul that looks alone to Jesus! While I have been exhorting you to pray—and I meant to do it earnestly, more earnestly than I have been able to do it—I did not wish you to put praying in the place of *believing*. If you cannot as yet understand Christ so as to rest on Him, if you cannot as yet cast yourself on Him—then pray for more enlightenment! Pray to be led to faith. Pray that faith may be given you; but O may God give you the power and the will now, even now, to exert a living faith upon the crucified Savior—for there is “life in a look at the crucified One.” Praying will ultimately bring you to that point, but I pray God to bring you to it *now* through His mighty Spirit, and so, like Bartimaeus, may we receive our sight and follow Jesus in the way, and to Jesus be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## 646 IN WHOM ARE YOU TRUSTING – ISA. 36:5

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A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Now in whom do you trust?” — Isaiah 36:5

THAT QUESTION may not be without importance in matters of ordinary life. We have all to trust our fellows, more or less, and I suppose we have all had to smart in some degree, as the result of it. We may trust the mass of men in trifles without any serious consequences, But when it comes to large sums— when the whole of a man’s fortune, for instance—is staked upon the character and reputation of someone else, then it is not altogether an unimportant question, “In whom do you trust?” Oh, many have rested on some choice friend, and found him play the Judas; how often have our dearest counselors turned away from us as Ahithophel did from David? How frequently have we confidently rested upon the integrity, friendship, and fidelity of some person whom we thought we knew and could trust, only to find that, “Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” Be cautious, my brethren—perhaps you need not that I should say this to you—but use discretion in all your transactions in life, as to how far you will trust the sons of men; or else this may be whispered in your ear, and may send you to your bed with a heavy heart, “Now in whom do you trust?” But, surely, if this is important in temporal matters, it is overwhelmingly so in regard to spiritual things. If I become bankrupt in trade, I may yet set up

in business, and retrieve my fortune; but in soul-matters, if I once make bankruptcy in the commerce of life, there is no hope of my receiving a fresh certificate, and attempting to retrieve my losses. Here, if a general is defeated in some great battle, he may yet possibly retreat in such good order, and again get together his troops so as to win another battle, and turn the current of the campaign. But once beaten in the great life-struggle, once feel that sin has utterly got the mastery over you, and that there is no hope here, and you will die so, and there is no more possible contest—you are vanquished. The battle is fought, and the victory is lost forever. Let us then, be very much concerned, dear friends, to inquire and to give an honest answer to the question, “In whom do you trust?”

First, *let us go round the congregation and collect a little bundle of answers*. Then, secondly, *let us hear the Christian’s answer*, and when we have listened to it, *let us give the Christian some few words of advice with regard to what his line of action ought to be*, seeing he has such a One to trust.

**I.** First, then, let us put this question and collect, I say, **A LITTLE BUNDLE OF ANSWERS**, “In whom do you trust?”

I think I hear some answer, “I do not know that I have thought about the matter at all. You ask me, ‘In whom do you trust?’ I shall have to say *I have left the matter of dying, and of eternity and of judgment, out of my consideration*; I hope it is a long time before I shall die, and there is no need to trouble myself before it is necessary, and, therefore, I put the matter off. I feel it is an unpleasant task to make too much inquiry, and, therefore, I have just left well enough alone. I cannot give you an answer, for I have not considered the matter.” My dear friend, don’t you think that you are very foolish? Do you forget that you may die this very moment—that there are more gates to death than you dream of—that there is a gate to death, yes, and to hell, too, from the place where you are now sitting? Have you never



heard of persons falling dead in the street, of bowing down as Sisera did, of whom it is said, “Where he bowed himself, there he fell down dead”? Have you a lease of your life? Are you certain that death is so far off? Have not you walked with dying men? I have. I have talked with them one day, and I have heard the next that they were in eternity. We shall hear the same of you. And is it wise to be trifling with these things as though you knew that you had 50 or 60 more years to live? And suppose you were sure of a long life, would you wish to delay being happy? Do you desire to postpone being made supremely comfortable? Remember, that to have your soul affairs set right in a proper manner is to obtain present joy and happiness. I do not think that young people ever say, “We are too young to enjoy ourselves; let us wait till we grow older, and then let us be happy.” And yet to be saved is to enjoy yourselves in the most emphatic sense of that term, and to find Christ precious is to be happy beyond all expression!

Why postpone that which is more pleasant than pleasure itself, and more sweet than honey dropping from the honeycomb? I pray, dear friends, think of this matter now, because you may have to think of it when it will only bring you bitterness and grief. That is a dreadful verse, where Christ says of the rich man in hell, “He lifted up his eyes.” Poor soul, why did you not lift up your eyes before? It is too late, for ah, you can see as you look up, Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, and yourself with a great gulf fixed, dividing you from him. It is too late for you to look about you then, for there is nothing to see but the consuming flames, and the tormentors who are to be your perpetual companions, with that dark despair, which, like a great gravestone, is to be forever on your heart! O, why did you not lift up your eyes before? Surely the only answer I can get from this poor wretch is, “Tell my brethren lest they come into this place of torment. Ask them to lift up their eyes now,

and to begin now to consider what shall be their confidence, and what the ground of their hope with regard to eternal things.” Careless sinner, I wish that those few words might be blessed to you. I would look you in the face and evoke you by the living God, by life, by death, by judgment, by eternity, by heaven, by hell—by everything that has power to move a rational being—set your house in order, and consider your latter end! And if you have no trust as yet, God help you to find one.

Well, we will try again and put the question to another. “In whom do *you* trust?” And I hear one stand up and say, “I thank God I am about as good as most people; I do not know that I have any particular cause to worry myself; if everybody’s life had been like mine, sir, it would be much better for their day and generation. I have never been a gross and open sinner; I have been a man who has set a good example to his family, and brought them up well. When the hospital wanted a guinea, I put my hand into my pocket and did not bring it out empty; when my poor neighbors have needed charity, they have never found a churl in me. I hope I can say it will go well with me, and if it does not, sir, it will go badly with a good many.” My friend, with that last sentence I perfectly agree—I am afraid it will go badly with a great many, but I do not see what consolation you ought to get out of that, for company in being ruined will not decrease, but rather increase the catastrophe. Let me say to you that it proves that the sum and the substance of your confidence is that you are trusting in yourself. Now, do you really and honestly think that you are, of yourself, sufficient to carry your soul through all the pangs and terrors of death, and to bring yourself, by your own merit, safe to God’s right hand? I think your conscience can remind you of some slips and some flaws—your memory must tell you of some sins, if they are not of the grosser kind—yet of some sins.

And let me say to you, remember that God has revealed in His own Word this truth—if any man will be saved by his own works, there is one condition which cannot be altered—namely, that he must be an absolutely perfect man. He must never have even sinned so much as once; he must never have had a sinful thought in his heart, or word on his tongue, or act in his entire life, or else he is guilty of a breach of the whole law! Now what do you say to that? This is no mere assertion of mine—this is God's own Word. And let me give you another passage, "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." O proud man, woman—do you think there was any need for Christ to die to save us if we could save ourselves? What? Do you think that God's servants have to say, "The righteous are scarcely saved," and do you, who believe in no Savior, think it such a simple thing to get to heaven, that you are going there by your own good deeds? I counsel you, (I pray you would take my advice), do with your good works just as the Ephesians did with their magical books—bring them out and burn all of them, for they will never do you any good, and they may do you infinite mischief. Come, my good friends, come as you are to that Savior who has opened a new and living way by His own precious blood, and who can do for you what these fine boastings of yours can only pretend to accomplish. Only He can save your guilty soul from the wrath to come.

I do not suppose that I could get from anybody present the answer which has come, no doubt, from the lips of very many to the question—"In whom do you trust?" "Why, I trust in my priest; he has been regularly ordained; he belongs to an Apostolic Church; he tells me that he will forgive my sins if I confess them to him, and that when I come to die he will give me my viaticum—he will grease my boots for the last journey, and send me off in such a state that the devil himself cannot hold me with this anointing oil upon me! If I cannot trust to a

priest, where *can* I fix my confidence?” I can give you an answer to that last inquiry, where can you trust—but let me appeal to any man or woman of sense who is here tonight, and who may have been relying upon a priest—What is there in any man, though he is six foot of clay, that you should put your trust in him? No doubt there have been some mystical incantations performed upon him, but in this 19th Century, are you such a fool as to believe that he has any grace to spare for you? If you would read the Scriptures, dear friend—only your priest does not care that you should do this, except it be his own version which he has well doctored before you get it—if you read the Bible, you will find that if you are a follower of Christ, *you* are as much a priest as he can be! You will find that one man is as much a priest as another, when he believes in Jesus—for, according to Scripture, all saints are a “royal priesthood.” As for myself, though I preach in this place the Word of God, I hate the very thought and name of priest, and I wonder how it can be that persons calling themselves Evangelical clergymen can talk of themselves as priests. Priests, indeed! I fear many of them are, but I wonder at the effrontery which should make them take the name and wear it. Priests? Great God, there is but one Priest before Your throne who can offer acceptable sacrifice, and that is Your dear Son who offers Himself forever as a great Sacrifice unto You! And as for us, we are but secondary priests under Him, and here none of us has any superiority over his brother, for all the saints are made in Christ Jesus, kings and priests unto God, and they shall reign with Him forever and ever! Do not be misled, dear friend—your priest might as well trust in you as you trust in him.

But it is probable, very probable, that I should get another answer if I were to put this question to you. Perhaps a considerable number of you would say, “Well, God is merciful. He is not so severe as to be unkind towards us, and we dare say,

though we may have a good many faults, yet as He is a very good and a very gracious God, He will forgive us our sins and accept us.” Then it seems, dear friends, that you are trusting in the mercy of God. Let me say to you that as you state it, you are trusting in what you will never find. If you were very generous, and there were a number of poor people in the city who you were determined to feed with bread, and you therefore issued an order that they were all to call at your son’s house, and that there they might have as much bread as they pleased—if they all declared that they would have nothing to do with your son, would not go to his house, and would sooner starve than go, and if they all came clamoring to *your* door, what would you say to them? You would say, “There is bread enough and to spare—I have provided it, my son will give it to you, but if you insult me to my face by telling me that you will not have what I freely give to you because of the way in which I present it, you may go without it.” And this certainly is how God will deal with you. He has treasured up all His mercy in the person of His own dear Son, and there it is—come and welcome! And it is said, that “Whoever comes” to Jesus Christ, He “shall in no wise cast out.” But if you go to God out of Christ, you will find Him to be a consuming fire! And instead of mercy you shall receive justice—and that justice will smite you to the lowest hell! What? Shall the King of heaven leave His throne, and lay aside His crown; shall He take off His azure mantle, put on the garments of a man, become poor and needy, live in poverty, and die in shame—and yet will you not take divine grace through such a channel as this? Shall God ordain this better than the golden pipe through which the crystal stream of His love and mercy shall run, and do you disdain this pipe? Shall God say that He has treasured up in Christ Jesus, all the fullness of the Godhead, and will you turn from Christ and say, “We will not have this Man to reign over us”? Then know this;

that the King sits upon His holy hill of Zion, and He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel, because you said, "Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast His cords from us." Rather let me bid you bow the knee, and kiss the Son. Cling to Jesus and then—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come."

Come through Jesus, for in God there is no divine mercy to those who come leaving Christ behind them.

There is only one other answer which I think it is likely I should get tonight, and it might be this— "Well, sir, I do not say that I can trust to my works, but I am a good-hearted man; I am a man of good intentions, and though I have a great many faults—still, sir, I am good-hearted at bottom—and I think God will look at my heart, and He will make me right at the end, notwithstanding my slips and wanderings by the way." Well, my dear friend, it is very well for you to say you have a good heart, you know, but we have nobody to prove it except yourself. That is a very silly thing which people say of men when they die, "Oh, he was rather bad in his life, and loose in his morals, but he was a good-hearted man at bottom." It reminds me of Rowland Hill's saying, "Yes, but when you go to market to buy apples, and you see a number of rotten ones at the top, if the market woman says, 'Oh, never mind, it is only the rotten apples at the top! They are very good at bottom,' you will say to her, 'My good soul, I will be bound to say the best are on the top, and they will not improve as you go down, for generally they will get far worse.'" And so if a man is rotten at the top, bad on the surface, I cannot tell how much worse he may be down below. It is said there was a man who used to swear and drink, who, nevertheless, applied for membership with Mr. Hill, and gave this reason for it, that though he did

drink occasionally, and frequently swear, yet he was good at bottom. Mr. Hill said, “Then you think I am going groveling down through the dirty foul filth of your life, to get the little good that is somewhere at the bottom of you? Why, sir,” he said, “it will not pay for the risk of digging out, and I am not going to do it.” And there is much truth in that saying, “If it is bad at top, it is worse at bottom, and if it is not good on the surface it will never pay for getting at it.” It will turn out, I am afraid, to be a delusion and a snare. Do not rest in that. If you will not be angry, I will tell you what your heart is. Your heart—you that have such good hearts—your heart, I say, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! In your breast there are what you little think of—envy, lust, enmities, and murders. All manner of unclean things are housed and caged within your breast. Do not talk about its goodness any more, for when you do, you call God a liar, and how can you expect to go to the heaven where God is, when you are thus insulting Him all the while?

**II.** Well, we have done with these poor answers, and we will come now to **THE CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER.**

“In whom do you trust?” “I trust,” says the Christian, “a triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I trust the Father, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust Him as my Father to care for me, to provide for me in providence, to teach me, to guide me, to feed me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house where the many mansions are. I trust the Son. Very God of very God is He—the Man Christ Jesus. I trust in Him to take away all my sins, for He suffered their penalty upon the cross; I trust Him to put all those sins away forever by His own Sacrifice; I trust Him to wrap me about with His perfect righteousness, and to adorn me with all His excellences. I know Him to be my intercessor—as often as I pray to present my

prayers and desires before His Father's throne, I believe Him to be my resurrection and my life, that, though I die, yet I may live again! I expect Him to be my advocate at the last great judgment, to plead my cause, and to stand there to justify me. I trust Him with all that I have, having no merit of my own—no confidence in my own tears, or prayers, or preaching, or willings, or doings, or believing—I trust Him for what He is, what He has done, what He has promised yet to do—I rely on Him, the incarnate Son of God. “And next,” says the Christian, “I trust the Holy Spirit; He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out; I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondence, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness. I trust the Holy Spirit to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly—spirit, soul, and body—and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light forever! Thus I trust a triune God through the Man- Mediator, Christ Jesus.”

And now, dear friends, there is much difference between the Christian's trust, you will plainly see, and the trust of other men. But to some men, this does not look like a real trust. “Why, we cannot *see* God,” says one, “How do we know all this about the Trinity? We can neither *see*, nor *hear*, nor *feel* God. Is this a real trust?” Cannot you trust in a thousand things you have never seen or heard? You take, I believe, bank notes, and yet you never saw the person who signed them or who issued them. There are a thousands things in this world which are real grounds of confidence, and yet you never saw them. Some of you, perhaps, may be earning your living by electricity. You are engaged in telegraphic operations, and you believe in electricity, but you never saw it. Every builder trusts in gravity! Every engineer in the world has to put his confidence in the law of



gravitation, and yet nobody ever saw this mighty power! But the thing is just as true as though one could see it, and those who have trusted in God find Him to be as real as if they could see Him. Though unperceived by sense, they find that when they get to Him, whom they cannot see, they get to One who is more substantial than things which are seen—which are temporal, for the things which are not seen are eternal. Some have said, “But does God interfere to help His people? Is the trust you impose in Him so really recognized by Him, that you can distinctly prove that He helps you?” Yes, we can, though God has never worked a miracle for me, yet He has done what I thought only a miracle could accomplish, and He has worked it in the common order of providence; and you shall find the same, if you trust Him with all your heart. He will hear your prayer, and listen to your cry, and deliver you out of deep waters and from bitter anguish; and though the depths will not be divided, fire will not cease to burn, nor will lion’s mouths be closed, yet you shall be as well delivered as if miracles were still the order of the day.

A Christian is sometimes asked whether he has a right to trust God. I have no business to rely upon one of you to do something for me, merely because I choose to trust you to do it; I must have your promise before I am wise in my confidence. Now, the Christian has God’s promise for it; he believes that Bible to be God’s book, and, therefore, when he finds God saying anything in that book to him, he believes it to be true, and he even finds it to be so. God has promised His people that if they trust Him, they shall lack no good thing. He invites them to trust, no, He commands them to trust, and, therefore, beloved, the Christian is justified in venturing to put his confidence in his God. But the worldling wants to know whether God is worthy to be trusted; and the Christian can say, “Yes, that He is. Our fathers trusted in Him, and they were not

confounded. We have trusted in Him, and we have never found Him to fail.” If I knew anything amiss of my God tonight, I would honestly tell it, but I know nothing but this—that He is faithful and true; I rest with my whole soul upon the finished work of Christ, and I have not found anything yet that leads me to suspect I am resting where I shall meet with a failure. No, the older one grows, the more one is convinced that he who leans by faith on Christ, rests where he never needs to be afraid. He may go and return in peace and confidence, for the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but God shall not change, and His purpose shall not cease to stand. Yes, God is worthy of our confidence.

And I think we can say, also, by way of commending our God to others; that we feel we can rest upon Him for the future. We have been in strange places and in very peculiar conditions in the past, but we never were thrown where we could not find all we needed in God. And we are therefore, encouraged to believe that when death’s dark night shall come with all its gathering of terror, we shall fear no evil, for the same God will be with us to be our succor and our stay. The Isle of Man has for its coat of arms three legs, and turn them which way you will, you know they always stand. And such is the believer—throw him which way you will—he finds something to stand on; throw him into death, or into life, into the lion’s den, or into the whale’s belly—cast him into fire, or into water—the Christian still trusts in his God, and finds Him a very present help in time of trouble. “In whom do you trust?” We can answer boldly, “We trust in Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never cease, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never be sullied, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness never can know a reduction.”

**III. Well now, if this is true, I am to close with **SOME WORDS OF ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE SO TRUSTING.****

They are, first of all, *drive out all unbelief!* Dear brethren, if we have such a God to trust, let us trust with all our might, and let us endeavor to get rid of those horrible doubts and fears, which so much mar our comfort. Why should we fear, my brethren? “Oh you of little faith, why do you doubt?” “Oh,” says one, “I do doubt, but I can hardly tell why.” Well, if your God is such a One as He really is, it is an insult to Him to doubt Him. We say of a rogue, we will trust him as far as we can throw him, and some people hardly give their God better measure than that. We never ought to count a man dishonest till we find him in some trick; now you have never found your God to be untrue; then do not doubt Him till you have. Give Him your trust till He proves unworthy of it. Let us repent for our harsh thoughts of God. I know you said you would be starved, but you are not starved yet; you said you should go to the poorhouse, but you are not there yet; you said you should die of a broken heart, but you have not died yet— you have a smiling face tonight. You told your friends you could never get through that trouble, yet you have got through it and 50 more troubles worse than that one; you said you would rather die than live, yet you did live—you have not died, and you do not want to die. Now why give God a bad name? When the devil calls God a liar, I can understand it, but it is hard of a man's own child to think ill of his father. I think it would cut me to the heart if my child could not trust me. And oh, how ungenerous, how unkind on your part—no, I will say on *my* part, on *our* part—that we cannot put more confidence in this kind, generous Father of ours who has never failed us, and who never will! Come, let us not doubt Him again. David does not appear to have made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said, “There is none like it.” He

had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory, and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, and therefore he is able to praise it forever after; he has no doubt about the keenness of the edge, or fineness of the tempering. Even so, my beloved brethren, let us speak well of our God—there is none like He in the heavens above or the earth beneath! “To whom can you liken Me, or shall I be equal says the Lord.” You may search the world around, and you will find that there is no rock, like the Rock of Jacob—our enemies themselves being judges.

So far from suffering any doubt to live in our hearts, we will take them all, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook, but as our stream at which to kill them, we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Savior’s wounded side! My beloved, we are truly guilty in speaking harsh things of our God. When the children of Israel came to the borders of the promised land, they sent out spies to search it and see what the prospect was, and how to prepare for the future occupation of it. Ten of the men on their return gave an ill report of the country which God had sworn to give to His people. Now, what was the punishment which was inflicted on them for this evil speech concerning God’s gift? Why, they died by the plague before the Lord, and thus God proved His anger and wrath against their sin! Happy is it for us that He does not thus visit our evil words and harsh thoughts concerning Himself; we have often brought up an ill report of our God when we ought to have praised Him without ceasing for all His loving kindness towards us, the sons of men. Brethren, let us give up all repining and fretful speaking—

“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,  
To heaven in supplication sent,  
Our cheerful song would more often be,  
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me.’”

Try this plan of turning all your complaints into prayers, and soon we shall hear you singing—

“O magnify the Lord with me,  
With me exalt His name!  
When in distress, to Him I called,  
He to my rescue came.  
O make but trial of His love.  
Experience will decide,  
How blest are they, and only they,  
Who in His truth confide.”

And then, brethren, let us *seek the Holy Spirit's help in this matter*. We have often said we would not doubt again, yet we have. Let us ask to be strengthened. We often forget that the author of our faith must be the finisher of it, also. It is well to keep in mind the fact that our faith is like the lamp which was burning in the temple, and never allowed to go out, but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil. Our faith is an immortal flame, but only so because God keeps it burning. He expects us to feed the flame by all possible means—and above all, to ask Him to give it the oil of divine grace through the means we employ for that purpose. Foolish virgins we shall be, if we do not secure this needed sustenance for our lamps. I am sure that many Christians are to blame for their own trials and afflictions of spirit, through dark doubts and unbelief. I know that there is a devil, and that he will seek to flood your fields, and make the fair garden desolation, and a mass of mud and corruption. But I know, also, that many Christians leave open the sluice gates themselves, and let in their own deluge, through carelessness and lack of prayer to God, to guard and protect them. I know that Satan will try to keep your soul in darkness

and gloom, but it is very often your own fault if he succeeds. Walk out into the beams which come from the Sun of Righteousness; stand in the light of God's reconciled countenance; come to the brightness of the Shekinah which covers the mercy seat, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over the joy and peace of your believing. Of course you will feel the shafts of the foe if you forsake the shelter of the high tower into which the righteous run and are safe. Confide, then, the custody of your soul to the good Spirit who is the Comforter, and who will preserve you from those evils which will arise if you think that you can be your own keeper.

Furthermore, let us try to *bring others to trust* where we have trusted. When a man finds something that is good and safe, he likes to recommend it to his friends—let us speak well of God to all our neighbors! Let us tell them, whenever we get an opportunity, that God does not leave His people; that He is not a wilderness unto His chosen, and it may be that God will bless our testimony to the bringing in of others. I have often mused on that account of our Lord's first disciples, where it is written that Jesus welcomed to His house two of John's disciples, and, "One of the two which heard John speak and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first finds his own brother, Simon, and says unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Then further on, we find our Lord saying to Philip, "Follow Me." What was the result? "Philip finds Nathanael, and says unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." No sooner do these men truly believe in Christ as the long-promised Messiah, than they call others to Christ, that they may also believe upon Him and become His disciples. So also with the woman of Samaria, she leaves her water pot and

goes into the city and says, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Is not this the Christ?” Now, with the same spirit we should be moved to go and proclaim to others the grace and goodness of the Lord our God.

When men engage in that perilous and foolhardy amusement of scaling the summits of ice-covered mountains, for no other reason than to be able to say that no one ever risked breaking his neck on that spot of the universe before, they are foolish enough to lead the way! How do they climb up those almost inaccessible peaks? Why, one man cuts the steps first with his axe, and mounting up, gives a hand to the next, and he puts his feet where the other has trod, and so they aid each other. And thus it is that we should ascend heavenward! Mount higher and higher yourself—ascending daily—and as you ascend, cut steps for others, and help them up, that together you may mount to the skies. If you were overtaken by a deluge, as sometimes happens in the lowlands of Australia, what would you think of doing first of all? Would you not make for the nearest hill and climb to the summit, and get your family and goods, if possible, safe out of the waters onto that hilltop, by your side? Yes, but if you are a man, in the highest meaning of the word, you would not rest content with that; you would try to rescue your neighbor, and his family, and cattle. Yes, everything that was in danger or within reach of the flood, would be, if possible, saved by you, and landed in safety by the side of your own property. Such is life; a flood of unbelief is abroad—“Get up into the high mountain”—and lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid! “Cry aloud and spare not,” but proclaim far and wide that there is a refuge here for all who wish to flee from the wrath to come. I think many of us, when we first were seeking the face of an offended God, vowed that if ever we were saved, we would seek to warn others also, and save them from being lost. Did we not say—

“Then will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found!  
I’ll point to His redeeming blood,  
And cry, ‘Behold, the way to God?’”

Begin now, then, to keep your promise! Warn all men and  
say to each with all your heart and soul—

“O, be earnest, do not stay!  
You may perish even today!  
Rise, you lost one, rise and flee!  
Lo! Your Savior waits for thee.”

And if, again, we are trusting in God, let us love Him who thus gives Himself to be trusted by us. No man can truly trust God who does not love Him. The sister graces always live together. They have but one address, for they all live in one home. Whenever there is faith, there love also dwells, and each grace takes up its residence likewise. Some are packed away into cellars or up in attics by many Christians, so that they are often not seen, and you would fancy that they were not at home when you called. I know that the chain of graces is unbroken, even when some links are unseen. God has sown the seeds of all the graces, and they will eventually, in the garden of the heart, all spring up and be to the glory of His name. What I want is that you should stir up the good thing which is in you; bring it out to the front, and make it appear. Show your love; if it is as a spark hidden in the midst of a heap of refuse, clear out the evil matter, fan the spark into a flame, and add fuel to it till you shall be all ablaze with love to God! Nothing short of this will satisfy God; anything else is wrong and should not, for one moment, be tolerated by us. What? Shall I hope for a heaven through the



grace of God in Christ? Am I expecting deliverance from ten thousand ills here and from hell hereafter? Do I trust the Most High for all temporal and spiritual good, and am I aware that I deserve not the least of all the many mercies I am receiving today, and hope to receive in days to come? Do I nevertheless cultivate no love to this loving God, this bounteous benefactor? Then I am one of the basest and most sinful of men because of my heartlessness and vile ingratitude—

“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove  
Had I no love for Thee!  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
Oh let me cease to be.”

And yet another thought before I conclude—we must prove our faith by our works. We must labor for the Lord in whom we are trusting—all must see that this is only right and fitting. What have we received, and why have we been made the recipients of these mercies? Is it not that we may go and do for others as God has done for us? O God, do You carry my burden, and shall I not carry Yours? O Christ, do You not carry the cross for me, and shall I not carry the cross for You? O my Father, do You, as it were, lay Yourself down and become a stone for me to build on, and shall not I desire to be built on You, that I may help others to rest on You, too? Christian brethren, let us do more for God! As we find Him more and more worthy of our trust, let us launch out into fresh fields of labor! Let us seek each day to labor for God, as the poet says—

“No day without a deed.”

So let us have no day without doing something by which we may advance the honor of the glorious name of our God.

We are bound to leave our affairs in God's hands, and then, instead of being idlers and loiterers, we are to go and work in His vineyard as long as it is called today. In this way we can prove our love, and show our gratitude, but here let me also call your attention to what is one sure way of augmenting your faith, and increasing your spiritual health. It is this—constant hard working for the Lord your God. Cease working and you will soon cease believing. You will best secure the constant joy and peace of believing, by living near to God, and, like the Savior when on earth, always being “about your Father's business.” Love Him as you trust Him! Work for Him as you love Him! Grow like He as you work for Him, and you shall soon come to be with Him as you are like He, and His shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen—

“Though faint, yet pursuing, we go on our way,  
The Lord is our leader, His Word is our stay.  
Though suffering and sorrow, and trial are near,  
Our God is our refuge, and whom can we fear?  
He raises the fallen, He cheers the faint;  
The weak and oppressed—He will hear their complaint.  
The way may be weary, and thorny the road,  
But how can we falter? Our help is in God!  
Though clouds may surround us, our God is our light!  
Though storms rage around us, our God is our might.  
So faint, yet pursuing, still onward we come  
The Lord is our leader, and heaven is our home!”

## **647 HEART'S EASE – PS. 112:7**

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### **A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 27th, 1865,**

**by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed,  
trusting in the Lord.” — Psalm 112:7**

THE LAST MONTH has been a peculiarly gloomy season. Evil tidings have followed on one another's heels like Job's messengers. Epidemics have been rampant among our families, and many are the early graves which have been filled by contagious diseases. It is greatly to be feared that the cholera is stretching its wings of death, and hastening to find its prey in our crowded lanes and alleys. The disease among the cattle is cutting off the herd from the stall, and polluting the most substantial food of man; and it is much to be feared that the continual showers must be spoiling much of the uncrated corn, and causing serious loss to farmers in the more northern counties.

In the newspapers, of the last few weeks, there has been a constant succession of the most fearful crimes. Scarcely have we known a period in which persons disposed to be melancholy might more thoroughly indulge their taste for the darkest apprehensions and forebodings. Cheerful as I am, I could, in some degree, sympathize with a good old saint with whom I sat a few minutes the other night. He began to lament our national sins, and tremble at the presence of what he

conceived to be national judgments. Though I am very far from being troubled with uneasy forecasts, yet I freely admit that old age and long experience may justly suggest to us earnest searching of heart because of the ills of the present period.

More terrible than rumor of plague or infectious disease of our cattle is the manifest fact that Popery is advancing among us with giant strides. Turn which way we will, Popery—Romish or Anglican—reeks in our nostrils. It is no longer engaged in secretly undermining our bulwarks—it has set its ladder to the wall, and is scaling the ramparts. The Popish party in the establishment, supported by the undoubted superstition of the National Prayer Book, now seeks to regain its ancient prominence, while its allies without are moving heaven and earth to win this nation to the dominion of Antichrist. Meanwhile, there are numerous causes for mourning in the Church of God itself—many defections, many departing from first principles and fundamental doctrines, and some, who did run well, suddenly turning aside and proving that they had never run in the power and energy of the Spirit of God. If one preferred the night side of life, one might sit down and readily gather congenial shades of cloud and mist about one's head and heart. But what good would this do? Despondency wins no victories. Let us pluck up courage, and go to our *knees* and to our God. Those who have laid hold on Christ Jesus, and are resting in the Father's love and power, have no reason to be disquieted—should all hell be unmuzzled, and all earth be unhinged, they may rejoice with a joy undampened by carnal fear or earthly sorrow; they have found a secret source of supply from which they can draw, if all earth's wells should suddenly run dry, for all their fresh springs are in their God. Of each believer, when full of faith, it is true, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

I. To come directly to the text. **EVIL TIDINGS MAY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN**—to those whose hearts are fixed and are trusting in the Lord.

It may be of great service to us to remember this dreary fact, for it may lead us to let go of earthly things. Let us chew this very bitter morsel for a moment or two—there is nothing very palatable or pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us, and prevent our boasting with the Psalmist, “My mountain stands firm: I shall never be moved.” It may stay us from taking too deep root in this soil from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden.

1. Let us remember the frail tenure upon which we *hold our temporal mercies*—how soon may evil tidings come concerning them. We rightly class *our families* first in our possessions. We look with deHeart's light into the faces of our children; we mark their growing abilities; we are charmed with evidences of opening intelligence—yet they may never live to manhood, their sun may go down before it is yet noon. We are, perhaps, perplexed as to what we shall do with them when they shall be old enough to be apprenticed to a trade, or initiated into a profession—we may never have that task to care for; long before they reach that period of life, they may be slumbering in their graves. We gaze with ever fresh delight upon those beloved ones with whom we are united in the ties of wedlock, but if we gaze wisely, we shall clearly see mortality written upon the fairest brow, and glistening in the most loving eyes, but how soon may these partners of our heart's best affections be torn away from us! We must beware of making idols of those who are nearest and dearest, for the objects of our idolatry may soon, like the golden calf, be dashed in pieces, and we may have to drink the waters of bitterness because of our sin. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked with the

woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us and the hour when we must return them to the Lender's hand may be even at the door.

The same is certainly true of our *worldly goods*. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? And though we have heard some almost profanely say that they have clipped the wings of their riches, so that they cannot fly away, yet the bird of prey may rend them where they are, and the rotting carcass of the wealth which the owners cannot enjoy may be a perpetual curse to them. Full often, gold and silver canker in the coffer, and fret the soul of their claimant. God can do with us as with Israel—“While the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God came upon them.” What substance have we beneath the skies? Is not what we call substance a mere shadow soon departing? Your good substantial ship has often returned from her voyage to enrich her owner, and just now, she flies before a favoring gale, but there are storms and hurricanes, and sunken reefs and quicksand—and who knows how soon your promising venture, and the vessel which bears it, may sink into the briny sea? There stands your warehouse—it is full of merchandize upon which, with but a fair profit, great wealth may be obtained, but a fire may come, and there may happen to be no insurance, or by a change of market, profit may wither into loss. Your present prosperity may soon be turned into distress by the failure of some larger warehouse, the dishonoring of large bills, a breach of credit, or an unexpected drain of capital. How often have enterprises high as the tower of Babel suddenly rocked, and reeled, and fallen in total ruin? This world, at best, is but a sandy foundation, and the wisest builder may well look for an end to the most substantial of its erections.

Evil tidings may also come to us in another respect—we may suddenly find our *health* decay. That strength which now enables us to perform our daily business with delight, may so fail us that the slightest exertion may cause us pain. Although unconscious of so sad a fact, we may be, even now, fostering within our bodies the disease which is destined to stretch us upon the bed of sickness; we should be prepared for the days of darkness, for they are many. The day of sickness would not overtake us as a thief if we were wise enough to remember that we are dust; frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming forever. Spring lasts not all the year—the time of the yellow leaf must come, and the frosts of winter must nip our root. Why should I suppose that I am to enjoy immunity from the common ills of mankind? Am I not among those who are born of woman? Is it not written that all such are “of few days, and full of trouble”? Do not the “sparks fly upward” from my hearth? And why, then, should I suppose that I am not “born to trouble” like the rest of my race? It were well for us if we would remember that there is a time appointed for weakness and sickness; then we should be more thankful for the privilege of going up to the Lord’s house, since the day comes when we can no longer go up Zion’s hill. While we can serve God, let us remember that the time may come when we shall rather have to fear than to do; when we can only glorify Him by suffering, and not by earnest activity. Be it ours to live while we live, and snatch the present moment out of the jaws of time, and while the evil days come not, nor the days draw near in which we shall say we have no pleasure in them, let us serve God with both our hands, and spend and be spent in His service! There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction. The fondest hope which you and I have cherished may yet drop like the fruit of the tree before it is ripe, destroyed at the core by a secret worm. Set not your

affections upon things of earth—set your whole heart upon things above, for *here*, the rust corrupts, and the moth devours, and the thief breaks through, but *there*, all joys are perpetual and eternal. What is there here, after all, but cloud land? Why seek we to be lords of acres of mere mist? What are earth's treasures but vapor? Will you heap up for yourself haze and fog? Cloud and mist will pass away, and if these are your riches, how poverty-stricken will you be when you can carry none of these airy riches into the land of solid wealth. Christian, remember well the insecurity of all earthly things, and be content to have it so.

Certain expositors refer this passage to *slander* and reproach, and they translate it, "He shall not be afraid of evil hearing." It is one of the sharpest trials of the Christian's life to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and belied, but any man who will serve his Master well must make up his mind to endure much of this affliction. The more prominent you are in Christ's service, the more certain are you to be the butt of jokes. I have long ago said farewell to my character—I lost it in the earlier days of my ministry by being a little more zealous than suited a slumbering age. And I have never been able to regain it, except in the sight of Him who judges all the earth, and in the hearts of those who love me for my work's sake. Beloved fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord Jesus, you must all set your account upon being despised, and reproached for His dear sake! You weaker ones come to your minister and say, "So-and-So has spoken evil of me." What? Young friend, is this a strange thing? Did this never happen to anybody before? You sit down and cry, "It will break my heart! This cruel report will be the death of me!" Was no one else ever broken in heart by reproach? Did nobody else have his character smeared by the fingers of envy, and the tongue of tale-bearing? Who are you, my fine sir that you should escape? Gentle sister, who are you that you are



never to be abused? Humble yourself, and do not be so proud as to think a special escape should be made for you when your Lord and all His followers have had to endure much contradiction of sinners. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! It is a blessing to attain to such a state that you care no more than the rock cares for the raging billows what men may say, as long as you have a conscience void of offense both toward God and toward man. In all these things, we ought to expect evil tidings.

2. Evil tidings will also come to us concerning *spiritual matters*, and babes in grace will be greatly alarmed. Every now and then, there comes a messenger with breathless haste who tells us that the sages have discovered that the Bible is a lie. Years ago, we were all astonished to find that people had been digging down into the earth, and had brought up loads of very hard stones with which revelation was to be slain, like Stephen by the Jews. Revelation has lived on wonderfully well, and flourished amazingly, notwithstanding all that. Another very judicious naturalist afterwards discovered—and oh, what consternation there was, that we had all sprung from monkeys, and that all living creatures were the result of successive developments from infusible atoms. Somehow or other, the gospel has managed to survive even this tremendous blow! Not many months ago, a learned quarryman dug up a jawbone, and a bushel or two of pointed flints—the undoubted property of primeval men who lived according to report, ages before Adam; now this discovery was to silence forever the teachings of inspiration. Those flints were invincible and deadly weapons! But the religion of Jesus is so full of life that her deadliest foes cannot make an end of her. Voltaire, you remember, had a printing press at Geneva, some years ago, with which he printed a prophecy that Christianity would not survive the century, of which he thought himself the bright and shining

light—that very press is now printing copies of the Bible in Geneva! A few weeks ago, we were informed ethnologically that Negroes were nearly allied to apes, and that the Scripture statement that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, was clearly contrary to fact; but, my brethren, this grand old Book manages still to survive, and I think the most of us, who know its value, can say we are not afraid of evil tidings which prophesy the overthrow of its authority—for it will see all its foes withered in the grass, and yet not one of its jots or tittles shall pass away. Our heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. We can leave these gentlemen to the old women among us, whose experiential acquaintance with the power of godliness will be as a two-edged sword to slay the enemies' sounding professions of superior intelligence. The blind and the lame in the Lord's army shall laugh to scorn the champions of the Philistines, for the Lord of hosts is with us as our Captain, and Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer.

Sadder tidings at times afflict us. We hear, dear friends, that *professors have fallen*, and what a thunderclap it seems when we are told that such-and-such a prominent member has forsaken the path of rectitude, or a minister has departed from sound doctrine. Yes, and we must expect this. Judas and Demas will be represented over and over again, and even Simon Magus will not be lacking in the Church as long as it is here below. We shall, moreover, hear that success has vanished where once it ruled. We may preach the gospel and win thousands of souls—but suddenly, there may be no conversions, and those who are the warmest adherents of the truth of God may gradually grow cold. Be ready for these things! There have been ebbs and flows in the Church in all ages, and her progress has been like that of the ocean when it comes to its flood—it has been by a succession of in-rolling waves, and waves that fall back again into the sea. So will it be till Christ comes.

We shall also hear evil tidings about *ourselves*. Satan will tell us that we are hypocrites, and conscience will remind us of sundry things which raise the suspicion that we are not soundly regenerated. It will be a blessed thing if then we can fly again to the cross of Jesus Christ. If the law thunders at us, and gives us evil tidings of wrath to come, happy are we if we can fly to the great law-fulfiller, and find a shelter from the law's clamorous demands. But we must expect this. No saint gets to heaven without being attacked by Satan. An old divine said that the way to heaven passed by the mouth of hell. You must have spiritual conflicts. How could you be crowned if you did not fight, and how could you win the victory if you knew no battle?

3. Moreover, to conclude the list, the evil tidings of *death* will soon be brought to you by the appointed messenger. How evil are the solemn tidings of departure to the most of men! The message will be given to us, "The Master is come, and calls for you." We shall see the spirit-finger which beckons down to the cold flood of Jordan, but we shall not fear those evil tidings! No, faith shall count them a *blessed* message, and we shall march cheerfully onward where Jesus leads the way.

In eternity, there shall be the evil tidings of the angelic trumpet, evil to all but saints, "Arise, you dead, and come to judgment." The general summons shall gather together all nations of men to stand before the dread tribunal, but truly in that case, our heart shall be so fixed, no, flooded with divine delights! With joy shall we receive the resurrection, and with transport stand to be acquitted at the judgment seat! I have thus marshaled before you a line of grim-visaged messengers—any one of whom may, within a moment, rush into your chamber, crying, "Tidings! Man of God, tidings!"

**II.** Now, for a second and more cheerful thought. **A CHRISTIAN AT NO TIME OUGHT TO FEAR EITHER AN**

**EXPECTATION OF EVIL TIDINGS, OR WHEN THE TIDINGS ACTUALLY ARRIVE.**

Under no conceivable circumstances ought you, Christian, to be afraid. And why? Because, if you are troubled, and distressed, and distracted, *what do you more than other men?* Other men have not your God to fly to; they are not favorites of heaven as you are; they have never proved the faithfulness of God as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm, and cowed with fear; but as for you, you profess to be of another spirit; you testify to the world that God dwells in you, and you in Him; you say that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope; you testify that your heart lives in heaven, and not on earthly things. Now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that divine grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess? Surely, dear brethren, unless you would be suspected of having boasted beyond your measure, you must not be afraid of evil tidings!

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, *you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances.* The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals harshly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord as they do? If you are the subject of the same distraction, you will, probably, fall into the same murmuring.

Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means, to evil shifts in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same, saint as you are, if your mind yields too far to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea—"Stand still and see the salvation of God." But if your heart is troubled, if the water gets to leaking into your ship, and

the vessel, itself, is filled with the boiling flood—why, you will be plotting this, and plotting the other, and before long you will be putting forth your hand unto iniquity, and so piercing yourself through with many sorrows; but if the Holy Spirit enables you, in patience, to possess your souls, then, if you suffer, you will not sin, and, with all your temptations, you will not suffer, by His grace, from the regret of having departed from the living God.

Further, you must not give way to these doubts, and alarms, and fears, for, if you do, *you will be unfit to meet the trouble*. In storms, landmen are all in alarm and fear, and they are fit for nothing. Just put them under the hatches, and keep them down below, or else they will be in the sailors' way. But the old sailor has seen a storm before, and the captain has had many a nor'wester blowing upon him—so he looks around him, just as if all were calm, and gives his orders to the pilot and the first mate with perfect composure; and when they have to reef all sail, and lie under bare poles, or, worse still, if the mast goes by the board, the captain is very serious, but still quiet and hopeful. He has weathered other tempests, and he shall outlive this also. But you flurried people, who are all in a fluster at every piece of evil tidings, what will you do? Why, you will cut your own fingers in seeking to carve your own deliverance! You will push down your house about your head when you meant to have propped it up! You will be quite unable to meet the difficulty if your heart is not “fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

Let me ask you another and very important question. If you give way to fright and fear when you hear of evil tidings, *how can you glorify God?* Saints can sing God's high praises in the fires, and bless His name on beds of sickness, but you cannot if you fall into distractions. Why, man, can your murmuring praise God? Your doubts and fears, as if you had none to help you—will these magnify the Most High? Come, I pray you, if

you would honor God, be brave. A certain good man was much troubled under a loss in business; his wife tried to comfort him but failed, but being a very wise woman, she gave it up till the morning. In the morning, when she came downstairs, her face looked so sad that her husband said, "What is the matter with you?" She, still preserving a mournful countenance, said that a dream had troubled her. "What was it, my dear?" he said, "you ought not to be troubled with dreams." "Oh," she said, "I dreamed that God was dead, and it was such reason for trouble, that all the angels were weeping in heaven, and all the saints on earth were ready to break their hearts." Her husband said, "You must not be foolish; you know it was only a dream." "Oh but," she said, "to think of God's being dead!" He replied, "You must not even *think* of such a thing, for God cannot die; He always lives to comfort His people." Instantly her face brightened up, and she said, "I thought I would bring you thus to rebuke yourself, for you have been dreaming that God had forsaken you, and now you see how groundless is your sorrow. While God lives, His people are safe."

So, Christian, I think I could give you many reasons why you should praise God, and take courage even when evil tidings come. For the sake of blessing others, for your own spiritual health and profit, that you may get fatness out of famine, safety out of danger, gain out of loss—pray that your heart may be fixed in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God.

**III.** But now, somebody will say, "I do not know how I am to keep from these fears. My mind is like that of another man, and I am readily disturbed." Dear brother, the text tells you, in the third place, that **FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS THE TRUE CURE FOR BEING ALARMED AT EVIL TIDINGS.**

"Fixedness of heart." The translators somewhat differ as to what this passage means; and some think it means

preparedness of heart—"my heart is fixed," or, "my heart is prepared." Let it mean *both*, and then we shall have the whole truth, for he whose heart is fixed is prepared. Now, in what respect is a Christian's heart fixed? I think in many.

First, the Christian's heart is *fixed as to duty*. He says within himself, "It is my business to walk as Christ walked—it can never be right for me to do contrary to God's will. I have set the Lord always before me, and in integrity of heart will I walk all my way, wherever that way may lead." Such a man is prepared for anything. Whatever trial comes, he is prepared to meet it because his soul is resolved that come gain, come loss, he will not be dishonest to make himself rich; he will not tell a lie to win a kingdom; he will not give up a principle to save his life. He has not to go, as some of you have, to the next neighbor to say, "What am I to do? What is the best policy?" The Christian has no policy; he does right, and leaves consequences to God. I know that if the skies needed propping with sin, it is no business of mine to prop them, and if they could only be sustained by my speaking falsely, they would fall. The truth of God is our business; integrity is our line of duty, and results remain with the Most High. In this respect, the man who, by grace, is fixed for the strait and narrow road is prepared, come what may.

But, more comfortable than this, the Christian's heart is *fixed as to knowledge* and so prepared. There are some things which a believer knows and is quite fixed about. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world's tiller, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything. "It is my Father's will," says he. He looks over the raging waters, and he sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice which says, "It is I, be not afraid." He

knows, too, that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is prepared for all events. They cannot come amiss, says he. There can be no accidents, no mistakes, nothing can occur which ought not to occur. If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills—the worst calamity is the wisest, and the kindest thing that could occur to me if God ordains it. “We know that all things work together for good to them who love God.” The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory, but he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as of yet; the poisonous drugs that have been mixed in the compound have, nevertheless, worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results—and so, believing this, that God rules it, that God rules wisely, that God brings good out of evil—the believer’s heart is fixed, and he is well prepared. Bring me which cup you will, my Father fills them all, and I will drink them as He sends them, not merely with resignation, but with sanctified delight. Send me what You will, my God, so long as it comes from You; never was that a bad portion which came from Your table to any one of Your children. My Father, write what You will concerning Your child, I will not, by Your grace, seek to pry between the folded leaves, but I will patiently hope, and quietly wait as leaf by leaf is unfolded, knowing You are too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. Now, see what a preparation this is for evil tidings, this having the heart fixed in a knowledge of God.

Further, there is another kind of fixedness, namely, *the fixedness of resignation*. There is a verse we sing in one of the hymns, that I hardly think at times some of us ought to sing, for it is not at all times true—



“O You gracious, wise and just,  
In Your hands my life I trust,  
Have I somewhat dearer still?  
I resign it to Your will.”

It is very easy to say that, but very difficult to carry it out. To take Isaac, our only son, up to the altar, and unsheathe the knife at God's command, needs an Abrahamic faith, and that kind of faith is not as common as it should be among Christians. Beloved, when we gave ourselves to Christ, we gave Him our person, our estate, our friends and everything; we made a full surrender, and the only way to be right when affliction comes is to stand to that surrender, in fact, to renew it every day. It is a good thing, every morning, to give all up to God, and then to live through the day, and thank Him for renewing the daily lease. If you think you have mercies on a 50 years' lease, you will become discontented if turned out of the tenancy, but if you feel you are only, as it were, a daily tenant, you will feel grateful that the great Landlord has given you a new lease. The eyes of your body—are they given forever? Their light may never know tomorrow's sun. Those lips, which you today give to God's service, may soon chill in silence. So is it with all you have. Then resign all to God, for if you give it all up to Him every day, it will not be hard to give it up when He takes it away at last. If you have resigned it a thousand times before, it will only be a repetition of what you have rehearsed to yourself before, and, therefore, are well taught in. Stand to your resignation; be fixed about that, and you will be prepared for the most evil tidings.

Better still; let me remind you of one form of fixedness which will make you outride every storm, namely, *fixedness as to eternal things*. “I cannot lose”—the Christian may say—“I cannot lose my best things.” When a carrier has many parcels

to carry, if he has gold and silver, or precious stones, he is sure to put them near himself. Perhaps he has some common goods, and these he ties on behind—some thief, it is possible, steals from the cart some of the common goods which were outside. “Oh, well,” says the man when he gets home, “I am sorry to lose anything, but my precious things are all right; I have them all safe; I thank God the thief could not run away with them.” Now, our earthly goods, and even our dearest friends, are only the common mercies of God—but our Savior, our God, our eternal interest in the covenant, our heaven, which we are soon to inherit—these are kept where they cannot be lost. A friend of mine once went up to the bank with a thousand pounds in his pocket. I do not think he was very wise, for after putting that large sum in his pocket, he put his handkerchief over it, and somewhere or other, down in the Borough, or over London Bridge, a thief stole his handkerchief! He said to me, “I never thought at all about that; I was so full of joy at finding that the money was not gone.” The anecdote is instructive, for our earthly comforts, compared with our eternal interests, are but as the handkerchief compared to the thousand pounds—no—they do not bear so high a relation! If adversity should come and take everything else away, yet, Christian, your heart is still fixed because you have a grasp of eternal things; and neither life nor death, nor time, nor eternity can make you let go of your hold of the glory which is to be revealed in you. Thus you are prepared, come what may.

I will only add one other thought on this point. I believe that *holy gratitude is one blessed way of fixing the soul on God, and preparing it for trouble*. You have a friend who gave you a very hard word the other day; you felt very grieved, but after a few minutes you said, “There, now, if he were to kick me, I should always love him for the great kindness that he did to me years ago when I was in great straits.” Now, when I think of what

our God has done for us, how He saved us from going down into the pit of hell, and found a ransom in His own dear Son, when we remember how He has plucked us out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay—let Him do to me what seems good to Him—the Lord gave us Christ, then let Him take away what He will, we cannot think harshly of Him; after such a proof of love, we are bound to Him by such ties of gratitude that, let Him take away one mercy after the other till there is hardly one left, we will yet bless His name. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Let every saint of God feel himself so fixed and bound by ties of gratitude that he is prepared, whatever may come, still to bless his God!

**IV.** The last point is this—**THE GREAT INSTRUMENT OF FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS FAITH IN GOD.** “His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” You see that we have come here by progressive steps. Evil tidings may come to an heir of heaven; he ought not to be afraid of them; the way to be prepared for them is to have your heart fixed and prepared, and the method of having the heart fixed is confident trust in the Lord. The Christian is not prepared for trial by trusting in his fellow men, or by relying upon his own wisdom and experience. We lean on a better prop than an arm of flesh. The Christian relies only upon his God. Every attribute engages this confidence. The heir of heaven rests in the *love* of God. “Oh,” he says, “my Father loves me too much to suffer any evil thing to damage me. I know by that very Spirit which He has given, by which I cry, ‘Abba, Father’—I know the tenderness of His heart forbids that I should ever perish, or that anything should happen to me which shall do me serious damage.” When there was a fire, many years ago, in the little town of Delft, in Holland, it occurred in a house upon the top of which a stork’s nest had been built. Now the storks are very affectionate to their young, and it was observed that as the flames went up, the storks tried

first of all to carry off their young, but when that could not be done, both parents kept flapping their nests with their wings, as though to cool the young ones, and when the flames drew nearer, both parents set themselves down over the top of the nest and there died with their young ones. Can it be possible that our God could have less affection for His own children than these poor birds had for the offspring of their nest? Impossible! He will cover us with His feathers, and under His wings will we trust! His truth shall be our shield and buckler. Come famine, come pestilence, come disease, come death, come judgment—

“He who has loved us bears us through,  
And makes us more than conquerors, too.”

The believer, thus dependent upon God's love, is also trusting in God's *power*. He knows that none ever did resist the Lord with success. That mighty arm breaks the enemy in pieces. When he goes forth to war, it is as when the potter breaks earthen vessels with a rod of iron. The Christian feels that the omnipotence of God is more to be trusted than the power of the devil is to be dreaded. “More is He who is for us than all they who are against us.” The Christian perceives the enemy round about, but his eyes have been touched with heavenly ointment, and he can also see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire, and therefore, he trusts in the power of his God, and his soul is not disturbed.

He relies also, as we have said, upon the wisdom of God, for indeed, every attribute of the Most High becomes a subject of the believer's joy. I am afraid, dear friends, we forget our God too often. I am sure that, at the bottom, we do not believe Him to be wise, or else we do not believe Him to be gracious, for if we did know, and feel, and realize that He is God, and

just such a God as Scripture says He is, we should lean back upon Him, and leave trouble, adversity, loss, and crosses with Him—casting all our care on Him because He cares for us. Get, I pray you, to be assured of His sympathy with you. Do not think He is indifferent to the griefs that vex you. You are in the furnace, but He sits at the mouth of it watching you as the dross melts in the flame. God is never away from any of His children, but He is nearest to those who are the most sad, and sick, and troubled. If there is one sheep in the fold that is more watched over than the rest, it is the weakest sheep. “He carries the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.” You cannot imagine how dear you are to His heart; and He is so determined to bring you safely home, that He has sworn it with an oath. By two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, He has given you strong consolation. Will you reject the consolation when *He* brings it? Is not the Comforter Himself able to comfort you? Christ has gone to heaven that you might have that precious gift of the Comforter within you. Why will you grieve the Holy Spirit of God and bring this trouble upon your own spirit by these anxieties, these doubts, and fears? “Trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Go with joy and draw water out of the well of salvation, and praise Him all the days of your life.

When Dr. Payson was getting near his end, he reminded his friends that God is enough for His people. He said, “In years gone by, I often dreaded the taking away of certain earthly comforts, but when they have been withdrawn, I have had so much more of the grace and presence of God, that I have had to be thankful for the apparent loss, for it was a real gain. And now,” he said, “that I am a cripple and confined to my house, I am far happier than I ever expected to be, and am as happy as a man well could be out of heaven.” We can sing that verse together—

“And if our dearest comforts fall  
Before His sovereign will,  
He never takes away our all;  
Himself He gives us still.”

Since you have your God left, Christian, let the text be true of you, “He is not afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

I have not time to say anything about the contrast to all this, but it is a contrast which would bear very hard upon those of you who have not looked to Jesus Christ. You have need to be afraid of everything. The stones of the earth are not in league with you, nor are the beasts of the earth at peace with you. There is no providence working your good; there is no special eye upon your benefit; you are orphan children. The stars in heaven fought against Sisera, remember, and they fight against you. The sweet influence of the Pleiades, you cannot know, and heavenly blessings, you can claim no share. Oh, that you could hide yourself beneath the wings of God! Do you desire it? Then remember who it was that said, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.” Fly to the Savior! There are His wounds; they will afford you shelter. He died to save the lost; for the rebellious, He has obtained mercies. Give Him your soul to save; trust Him to work a good work in you, and for you, and you shall never die, but, with holy joy and confidence shall live in the light of His countenance forevermore! The Lord bless this sermon to the staying of His people’s hearts upon Himself, and His shall be the praise. Amen.

## **648 DEGREES OF POWER ATTENDING THE GOSPEL – I THESS. 1:5**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 3rd, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”  
— I Thessalonians 1:5**

PAUL HERE claimed two things which are absolutely necessary to success in the Christian ministry. He could call the gospel, “Our gospel,” and this is a foremost essential in a sent servant of Jesus Christ. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, here speaking at once, declare the Word of God which they had preached to be their own in a peculiar sense—every true minister must be able to do the same—we must, ourselves, have been saved before we preach salvation. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” says the psalmist. “We also believe, and therefore speak,” say the whole college of the apostles. Without faith, the religious teacher is a mere pretender unworthy of respect. The Christian minister must, however, not only believe the truth of what he asserts, but he must experientially enjoy it. The farmer who labors must himself also first be a partaker of the fruit. Before Ezekiel delivered to the people the prophecies which were written in the roll, the voice came to him, “Son of man, eat this roll,” and he did not only take it into his mouth, where

it was like honey for sweetness, but it descended even into his heart, and mingled with his innermost self. We must ourselves feel the weight of that burden of the Lord which we proclaim to others, or we shall not be ministers of the apostolic sort, but rather shall be descendants of the hypocritical Pharisees who bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon other men's shoulders, but were not willing to touch them with so much as one of their fingers.

The apostle Paul could with peculiar propriety, call the gospel his own; on the road to Damascus he had singularly experienced its mighty power; and afterwards, in many trials, in many difficulties, in varied experiences, in furious temptations, he had made each truth of Scripture his own, by having tasted its sweetness, handled its strength, proved its comfort, and tried its power. Do not think of preaching, young man, until you have the truth of God written on your very soul; as well think of steering the Great Eastern across the ocean without knowing the first principles of navigation; as well think of setting up as an ambassador without your country's sanction, as to dare to intrude yourself into the Christian ministry unless the gospel is first your *own*. No amount of training at Oxford, or Cambridge, or anywhere else, no extent of classical or mathematical teaching can ever make you a minister of Jesus Christ, if you lack the first qualification, namely a personal interest in salvation by Jesus Christ. What? Will you profess to be a physician while the leprosy is on your own brow? Will you attempt to stand between the living and the dead when you are yourself devoid of spiritual life? The priests of old were touched with the blood upon their thumb, toe, and ear, to show that they were consecrated everywhere. And none among us must dare to exercise any office for God among His people till first of all we know the cleansing, quickening, refining, and sanctifying power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It must



be *our* gospel before we may think of aspiring to the high and holy office of the gospel ministry.

But this alone is not sufficient. The Christian minister, if he would imitate Paul, must be very careful of *his manner of life among the people*. He must be able to say without blushing, “You know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” Unselfishness must be our prominent attribute, all must be done for our people’s sake; and then we must, in our lives, show the truthfulness of our unselfish professions. O God, how much of grace is needed that Your servants may be clear of the blood of all men, and make full proof of their ministry! We are not appointed to stand as motionless way-posts, to point the way with lifeless accuracy and unsympathizing coldness—this many have done, and while showing the road have never moved one inch in it themselves—such men shall have terrible judgment at the last. We are appointed to be guides to the pilgrims over the hills of life, and we are bound to attend their footsteps, and tread the road ourselves; clambering up every Hill of Difficulty, and descending every Valley of Humiliation, we are to be crying to the pilgrim band, “Be followers of us, even as we are followers of Christ Jesus.” It is not for us to say, “Go!” but, “Come!” We are not to bid you *do* anything without first doing it ourselves. It is an ill time with the preacher when he is compelled to say, “Do as I say and not as I do,” for evil practice will drown the best of preaching! Holy living, intense earnestness, passionate longing for souls, vehement persistency in prayer, humility and sincerity, must so blend together in our walk and conversation, that having the gospel to be our own, we may be fully fitted for the work of the Christian ministry—“For your sake”—that you who hear us may not find us unprofitable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said this much upon the ministry itself, we observe that our text deals mainly with the hearers, and therefore has a voice for you. We shall use the text for two purposes—first, by way of *discrimination*; and secondly, for *instruction*.

I. The text suggests, and very strongly too, a thoroughly heart-searching **DISCRIMINATION**, a mode of testing ourselves by which our election may be proven, or our unregeneracy discovered.

The gospel comes to all who hear it. In our own land, especially among you who constantly attend places of worship, it comes to you all. If I understand Scripture aright, it is the same gospel which comes to the unregenerate as to the regenerate, and though in some it is “a savor of death unto death,” and in others, “a savor of life unto life,” yet the distinction is not in the gospel, but in the way in which it is received or rejected. Some of our brothers who are very anxious to carry out the decrees of God, instead of believing that God can carry them out Himself, always try to make distinctions in their preaching. They preach one gospel to one set of sinners, and another to a different class. They are very unlike the old sowers, who, when they went out to sow, sowed among thorns, and on stony places, and by the wayside. These brothers, with profound wisdom, endeavor to find out which is the good ground; they insist upon it that not so much as a single handful of invitations may be cast anywhere but on the prepared soil. They are much too wise to preach the gospel in Ezekiel’s fashion to the dry bones in the valley while they are yet dead; they withhold any word of the gospel, till there is a little quivering of life among the bones, and then they commence operations. They do not think it to be their duty to go into the highways and hedges, and bid all, as many as they find, to come to the supper. Oh, no, they are too orthodox to obey the Master’s will; they desire to understand first who are

appointed to come to the supper, and then they will invite them. That is to say, they will do what there is no necessity to do. They have not faith enough, or enough subjugation of will to the supreme commands of the Great Master, to do that which only faith dares do, namely, tell the dry bones to live, bid the man with the withered hand stretch out his arm, and speak to him who is sick of the palsy, and tell him to take up his bed and walk.

It strikes me that refusing to set forth Jesus to *all* men of every character, and refraining from inviting them to come to Him is a great mistake. I do not find David suiting his counsels to the ability of men; he gives commands to ungodly men—“Be wise, therefore, O you kings; be instructed you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little.” He did not withhold his exhortation because they were such rebels that they would not and could not kiss the king. No! He told them to do it whether they could or not! So with the prophets. They boldly say, “Wash yourself! Make yourself clean! Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.” One of them absolutely cries, “Make yourself a new heart, and a new spirit,” (Ezek. 18:31). And yet, I doubt not, that he was perfectly agreed with that other prophet who taught the powerlessness of man in those two memorable questions, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” These men did not think that they were to judge of what they were to preach by the degree of power in the hearers; but they judged by the power which dwells in their God to make the word effectual. As it was with prophets, so was it with apostles; for Peter cried to the crowd who gathered about the Beautiful Gate of the temple, “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” They delivered the gospel, the same gospel, to the dead as to the living—the

same gospel to the non-elect as to the elect. The point of distinction is not in the gospel, but in its being applied by the Holy Spirit, or left to be rejected of man. The same gospel, it strikes me in the text, came to all, and the point of distinction was farther on, namely, in the operation of that gospel upon the heart.

1. It appears, then, in the first place, that to some the gospel comes only in words. Even here, there are different levels. To some it only comes in words in this fashion, that *they scarcely know what it is all about*. Some of you go to a place of worship because it is the right thing to do, and you sit down on the seats, and sit out an hour-and-a-half or so of penance. When that is done, you feel you have performed a very proper act, but you have no idea what the talk was all about. It may be said of you that hearing, you do not hear, for your ears are dull and heavy. You know no more of the divine mind than the men who were with Saul on the road to Damascus, who heard a Voice, but saw no man. I believe a very large majority of church goers know no more of what the preaching is about, than did Jonathan's lad when he ran after the arrows. Their flight David well understood, "But the lad knew nothing of the matter." Too many are merely the stolid, unthinking, slumbering worshippers of an unknown God. In others the word comes in a little better sense, but still in words only. They hear it, and *they understand it in theory*, and probably are much pleased with it, especially if it is delivered in a manner which suits their taste, or which commends itself to their understanding. They hear and they do not quite forget. They remember and are gratified with illustrations, doctrinal truths, and so on, but when you have said that, you have said it all. The gospel remains in them as certain potent drugs remain in the chemist's bottles—they are there but they produce no effect. The gospel comes to them as an unloaded cannon rumbles into its shed, or as a barrel of

gunpowder is rolled into the magazine—there is no force in it because the fire of God's Spirit is absent. The preacher lashes the air and whips the water; he woos the wind, and invites the cloud when he preaches to such as these. They hear, but hear in vain, insensible as steel.

To others it comes in a preferable manner, but still only in words. *They are really affected by it*; the tears stream down their cheeks; they scarcely know how to sit; they resolve, if they once get home, they will pray; they think of amending their lives—past follies and present dangers come before them, and they are somewhat alarmed. But the morning cloud is not more fleeting, and the early dew vanishes not sooner than these good things of theirs; they look at their natural face in the glass of the word, but they go away and forget what manner of men they are—because the emotion felt is produced by the words, and not by the Spirit and life of the truth of God. Why, brethren, men weep at a theater, and weep far more there than they do in many places of worship. Therefore, merely to weep under a sermon is no sign of having derived profit from it. Some of my brothers are very great hands at unearthing the dead; they conduct you to the funeral urns of your parents, or remind you of your departed little ones, and possibly they may be the means of introducing better feelings by this kind of working upon your emotions, but I am not convinced of it—I am afraid that much of the holy water which is spilt from human eyes in our places of worship, is not much more valuable than the holy water at the doors of the Catholic chapels. It is mere eye water, after all, and not heart sorrow. Mere excitement produced by oratory is the world's weapon in attaining its end; we need something more than that for spiritual purposes—if we could “Speak with the tongues of men and of angels,” and stir you up to as great an enthusiasm as ever Demosthenes worked in the Greeks of old—all that

would avail nothing if it were only the effect of the preacher's impassioned language, and telling manner—the gospel would have come to you “in word only,” and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing more.

At this point I may very solemnly ask, whether it is not true of some who compose the present congregation that you know the truth only *in word*? There is a certain class of persons, and some of them are present this morning, who are professional sermon hearers; you go one Sunday to hear Mr. A., and then another Sunday to hear Mr. B., and you carry with you our sacchraometers—instruments for measuring the quantity of sweetness in each sermon. And you make note of the style and manner of the preacher; you estimate what blunders he makes, and how he could be improved; and you compare or contrast him with somebody else, as if you were tea tasters tasting Souchong and Bohea, or cheese mongers trying Cheddar and American! Some individuals of this order are little better than spiritual vagabonds without settled habitation or occupation; they go about from place to place, listening to this, and to that, and getting no good whatever; and as to doing good, the thought never enters their brain. You cannot expect that the gospel will come to you in anything else but as a killing letter, for you go to hear it as merely words. You do not look for fruit—if you see leaves, you are quite satisfied; you do not desire a blessing, if you did, you would receive it. It is at once, one of the most wicked and one of the most foolish habits to waste our time in, constantly criticizing God's Word and God's ministers. Well said George Herbert, “Judge not the preacher, he is your judge.” What have you to do to say of God's ambassador, that his words were not well mouthed? If God speaks by him, God knows who is best to speak for Him; and if his Master sent the man, beware lest you ill-treat him, or you

may suffer like they of old who ill-treated the ambassadors of David, and drove him to proclaim war against them.

2. According to the text, *there are others to whom the word comes with three accompaniments*. The apostle speaks of “power,” and “the Holy Spirit,” and “much assurance.” I do not think that the word of God comes to many people with all these three things. It comes to a very numerous class with “power,” to a smaller number with “power and the Holy Spirit,” and to an inner circle of select ones “in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.” If I have the meaning of this passage, and I am not as certain about it as to dogmatize, it strikes me that there are three degrees of effect produced by the gospel. At any rate, we shall not be wrong in saying that there is sometimes an effect produced by the gospel which may be called “*power*,” but which, nevertheless, is not the power which saves. To many of you, my dear hearers, the word of our gospel has come with power upon your *understandings*. You have heard it, weighed it, judged it, and received it as being true, and of divine authority. Your understanding has assented to the various propositions which we have proclaimed as doctrines of Christ. You feel that you could not well do otherwise; these truths of God agree so well, and are so adapted at once to the ruin of your nature and to its best aspirations, that you do not kick, as some do, against it. You have been convinced of the authenticity and authority of the gospel by the gospel. Perhaps you have never read “Paley’s Evidences,” and never studied “Butler’s Analogy,” but the gospel itself has come to you with sufficient power to be its own witness to you, and your understanding joyfully acknowledges that this *is* the Word of God, and you receive it as such.

It has done more than that; it has come with power to the *conscience* of some of you. It has convicted you of sin; you feel now that self-righteousness on your part is folly, and though

you may indulge in self-righteousness, it is with your eyes open. You do not sin now so cheaply as you once did, for you know a little of the sinfulness of sin. Moreover, you have had some alarms with regard to the ultimate end of sin. The gospel has made you know that the wages of sin will be death; you feel that you cannot dwell with everlasting burnings; your heart is ill at ease when you think upon the wrath to come. Like Felix you tremble when you are reasoned with concerning “righteousness and judgment to come.” And though you have put it off as yet, and have said, “Go your way till I have a more convenient season,” yet it has come to you so far with a degree of power. More than this, it has had an effect upon your *feelings* as well as upon your conscience. Your desires have been awakened; you have sometimes said, “Oh that I were saved!” You have advanced as far, at any rate, as Balaam when he said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” Your feelings of hope are excited—you hope that you may yet lay hold of eternal life, and your fears are not altogether dead—you tremble when under the Word of God. Natural emotions, which look like spiritual ones, have been produced in you by the beaming of the word, though as yet the gospel has not come with the Holy Spirit. Beyond all this, the gospel has come with power to some of you *on your lives*. I can look with anxious pleasure upon some of you, because I know the gospel has done you much good, though it has not saved you, though alas, there are others to whom it has only been for a time as a bit and bridle, but they have afterwards turned aside from it. There are those here, who, like the dogs, have gone back to their vomit, and, like the sow that was washed, to their wallowing in the mire. We had hope for you once, but we must almost cease to hope. Certain persons rush into drunkenness after seasons of abstinence—having known the evil of the sin, and having professed to hate it. The passion has been too strong for them, and they have



fallen again into that deep ditch in which so many of the abhorred of the Lord lie and rot. Oh, may God, in His infinite mercy, bring the gospel with something more than this common power to your souls! May it come with “the Holy Spirit” as well as with power!

You see, we have come up by steps to some considerable height already, but we now come to a far nobler elevation and speak of saving grace. To many in this house, as at Thessalonica, the word has come “*in the Holy Spirit.*” Brethren, I cannot describe to you how it is that the Holy Spirit operates by the word. The work of the Spirit is figured forth by some such mysterious timing as a birth, or as the blowing of the wind. It is a great secret, and therefore not to be expounded, but many of you know it experientially. The Holy Spirit, first of all, came to you as the *Great Quickener*. How He made you live you do not know, but this you do know, that what you once had not, you now have! You know that there burns within you a vital spark of heavenly flame far different from that ordinary spark of life which had been there before; you now have different feelings, different joys, and different sorrows from any you were conscious of before. While you were listening to the letter which kills, the Spirit of God came with it, and the Quickening Spirit made you live with a new, higher, and more blessed life. You now have within you Jesus Christ, who is life and immortality! You have heaven begun within your heart; you have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. To you the Word of God then has come with the Holy Spirit in a quickening sense. Then it entered with an *illuminating* power. It enlightened you as to your sins. What blackness you discovered in your sins when the Holy Spirit once cast a light upon them. Brethren, you had no idea that you were such sinners as you turned out to be. The Holy Spirit startled and astonished you, with revelations of that great and

fathomless depth of depravity, which you found to be surging within your souls. You were alarmed, humbled, cast into the dust. You began, perhaps, to despair, but the same illumination of the Spirit came in to comfort you—for He then showed you Christ Jesus! He showed you the unbounded power of His blood to take away your unbounded sins; He revealed to you His willingness to receive you just as you are; His suitability to your case and to your circumstances, and as soon as you saw Jesus in the light of the Holy Spirit, you looked unto Him and were lightened—and therefore your face has never been ashamed.

So the Spirit of God came to you as light, to dispel your darkness, and give you joy and peace. Since that time you have experienced the Holy Spirit as *comforting* you. Amidst darkest shades He has risen as the sunlight upon your souls. Your burdens have been removed by Him, the blessed Paraclete! He has brought Christ, and the things of Christ, to your remembrance; He has opened up to you precious promises; He has cracked the shell, and given you to partake of the kernel of the privilege of the covenant of grace. He has broken the bone, and satisfied you with marrow and fatness out of the deep things of God. His dove-like wings, whenever they brood over you, bring order out of confusion, and yield kindly comfort in the midst of adversity. You have also felt the Holy Spirit in His inflaming energies. He has rested on you when you have heard the word, as the Spirit of burning—your sin has been consumed by the holy revenge which you felt against it. You have been led to great heights of love to Christ, till you could sing—

“Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,  
Not one should be silent!  
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,

I'd give them all to You.”

When the Holy Spirit has blessed the word, your heart has been like the altar of incense with the flame always burning, and a sweet perfume going up, acceptable to the Most High. Beloved, you have also felt the Holy Spirit with the word as a spirit of *rejoicing*. Oh, the bliss we have sometimes tasted! I am very frequently heavy in spirit, but oh, the raptures which my heart has known, when the Holy Spirit has shown me my eternal election of God! My standing in Christ Jesus! My completeness and acceptance in the Beloved! My security through the faithfulness of the Eternal God! What delights come streaming into the soul when you read of everlasting love, of faithfulness never wavering, of affection never changing, of a purpose standing fast as pillars of brass and firm as the eternal hills. And oh, beloved, what extravagance I was about to say, of joy do we sometimes feel in anticipation of the glory to be revealed! Looking from Nebo's brow we see the landscape down below, but, better than Moses could do, we already drink of the rivers which flow with milk and honey, and pluck ripe fruits from celestial trees. While in communion with Christ Jesus we get the best taste of the glory that remains. Now this it is to receive the word, “in the Holy Spirit.” Beloved, I hope we know what this means, and you who do not know it, may a prayer go up from every living soul here, “Lord, let the Holy Spirit go with the preaching of Jesus Christ, and let it be made effectual unto salvation.”

Beloved, the highest point in the text is, “*much assurance*.” If I understand the passage, it means this—first, that they were fully persuaded of its truthfulness, and had no staggering or blinding doubts about it; and secondly, that they had the fullest possible conviction of their interest in the truth delivered to them. They were saved, but better still, they knew that they

were so; they were clean, but better still they rejoiced in their purity; they were in Christ, but what is more joyous still, they *knew* that they were in Christ. They had no doubts, as some of you have, no dark suspicions; the word had come with such blessed demonstration that it had swept every doubt clean out of their hearts. According to Poole, the Greek word used here has in it the idea of a ship at full sail, undisturbed by the waves which ripple in its way. A ship, when the wind is thoroughly favorable, and its full sails are bearing it directly into harbor, is not held back by the surging billows. True, the vessel may rock, but it neither turns to the right hand, nor to the left; let the billows be as they may, the wind is sufficiently powerful to overcome their contrary motion, and the vessel goes straight ahead. Some Christians get the gospel in that way. They have not a shadow of a doubt about its being true; they have not even the beginning of a doubt about their interest in it, and therefore, they have nothing to do, but with God's strong hand upon the tiller, and the heavenly wind blowing right into the sail, to go straight on, doing the will of God and glorifying His name. May the word come to you, dear friends, as it does to so very few! May it come in "full assurance," as well as in "power," and in "the Holy Spirit."

3. I shall leave this first head of the text when I observe that *this is the way in which God's elect are known*. The apostle says, "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God." Why? Knowing it not by making a guess about it; not by questioning you whether you are awakened sinners, whether you are sensible or insensible sinners; not by waiting to preach the gospel to you when you are prepared to receive the gospel; but we preached the gospel to you as you were, and we found out who were the elect by this, that the elect of God received the gospel as it came, "in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." This is the test of election—the Holy Spirit

blessing the word; and, dear friends, if the Holy Spirit has blessed it to you, you need not turn over the mysterious pages of the divine decrees, for your name is there! You have not *my* word for it, but *God's* Word for it. He would not have brought you to feel the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit if He had not, from before all worlds, ordained you unto eternal life! But mark and observe from the ensuing context, *you must give good proof that it is so*, or we cannot say, and even the apostle could not have said—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." We cannot tell whether the word has come to you in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, unless there are the corresponding results. Listen to these words—"And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: so that you were examples to all who believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

So you see an imitation of apostolic example, a faith which becomes so known as to sound abroad, a joy which affliction itself cannot dampen, and a perseverance which is not to be turned aside by difficulties, a conversion which gives up the dearest idols, and binds us to Christ, and makes us watch and wait for Him—all these are necessary as proofs of the Holy Spirit having been with the word. O beloved, I would have you, the members of this congregation, not only converted, but so converted that there should be no doubt about it! I would love to have you not only Christians, but such fruit-bearing

Christians, that there can be no doubt that you have received the word “in much assurance.” Then shall it be equally clear that you are the elect of God. May the Lord grant that the Word of God here may always be like a powerful magnet thrust into a heap of steel filings, and of ashes which shall attract all the filings and bring them out. For that is what the gospel is to do—it is to discern between the precious and the vile! It is to be God’s winnowing fan to separate His elect from those who are left in their ruin; and it only can do this by the way in which it is received, proving the election of those who receive it, “in the Holy Spirit.” Thus much by way of discrimination.

**II.** Have patience for a few minutes while we now use the text by way of **PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION**.

It is clear from the text, by way of practical instruction, that it is not enough to preach the gospel. Something more is needed for the conversion of souls than even that. I have stirred you up very often to assist me, dear brethren, in training those of our young men who have been called to preach the gospel, that they may be more efficient in their ministry, and you have kindly helped me. But we must always bear in mind that though God should privilege us to send out hundreds of His ministering servants, yet there will not be a solitary case of conversion worked by them, alone. We wish to do our best to erect fresh places of worship for this ever-increasing city, and it is a happy day to me whenever I see the top stone brought out of a new house of prayer; but not one single soul shall ever be made to rejoice in Christ Jesus by the mere fact of a place of worship being erected, or of worship being celebrated in it. We *must* have the energy of the Holy Spirit! That is the one all-important matter. What is there practical about this? Why, then, *it becomes more and more imperatively necessary that we should be much in prayer to God that the Holy Spirit would come!* We have the spirit of prayerfulness among us as a church. Let me earnestly entreat

you never to lose it. There are certain of my brethren here who are never absent from our great gathering on Monday evening, and whose prayers have brought down many blessings. But it is the part of fidelity, for me to say that there are some of you who might be here if you would, but seldom favor us with your presence. Or, let me say, who seldom do yourselves the happiness of waiting upon God in prayer meetings; you are not the best of our members; you will never be the best of them if you stay away without having a justifiable excuse.

I do not say this to those who I know must be absent, and I do not say it to bring women out who ought to be seeing to their husbands, or to bring men out who ought to be attending to their shops. But I say it to some who might as well be here as not, and would bring no detriment to themselves whatever by being here. And I must qualify what I say with this—I have less to complain of in this respect than any man in Christendom, for there is no place that I ever knew or heard of where the prayer meeting bears so good and fair a proportion to the Sunday gathering as it does here. But still, brethren, we need you ALL to pray! I would I could see you all! Oh, it would be a happy day if we could see this place full on Monday evening. I do not know why it should not be. It strikes me that if your hearts were once to get thoroughly warmed, we would fill this house for prayer. And what a blessing we might expect to receive! Why, we have had such a blessing already that we have not room enough to receive it now! But still, as the cup begins to run over, let it run over and over; there are many churches in this neighborhood that can catch the spillover, and may they be profited thereby! Let us increase our praying as we increase our doing. I like that of Martin Luther, when he said, “I have so much business to do today, that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours’ prayer.” Now most people would say, “I have so much business to do today, that I

must only have three *minutes'* prayer—I cannot afford the time.” But Luther thought that the more he had to do, the more he must pray, or else he could not get through it! That is a blessed kind of logic—may we understand it. “Praying and provender hinder no man’s journey.” If you have to stop and pray, it is no more an hindrance than when the rider has to stop at the farrier’s to have his horse’s shoe fastened, for if he went on without attending to that, it may be that before long, he would come to a stop of a far more serious kind.

Let us learn from the text *our own indebtedness to distinguishing and sovereign grace*. You observe, beloved that the gospel does not come with the power of the Holy Spirit to everybody. If then, it has come to *us*, what shall we do but bless and praise the distinguishing grace which made it come to us? You observe that the distinction was not in the persons themselves—it was in the way in which the gospel came. The distinction was not even in the gospel, but in the attendant Holy Spirit, making it effectual. If you have heard the word with power, it was not, dear brethren, because you were more ready, because you were less inclined to sin, or friendlier towards God. You were an alien, a stranger, a foreigner, an enemy—you were “dead in trespasses and sins”—even as others were and are. There was in you, whatever Papists may say, no grace of congruity to meet with the grace of Christ. They say that there is something in man congruous to the grace of God, so that when saving grace comes to those who have the grace of congruity, they are saved. In me I know everything was incongruous, everything contrary to God. There was darkness and light came; there was death, and life entered; there was hatred and love drove it out; there was the dominion of Satan, and Christ overcame the traitor—

“Then give all the glory to His holy name,  
To Him all the glory belongs!



Be yours the high joy still to sound forth His name,  
And praise Him in each of your songs.”

A third practical lesson we will but hint at, namely, we see that *there are degrees of attainment* even among those who have received the word with the Holy Spirit. *Let us seek for the very highest degree!* You are not generally satisfied with the same qualities of life; you desire to possess its comforts and luxuries. I will commend you if you carry this into spiritual things. Do not be content merely to be saved, merely to be spiritually alive—ask to be valiant for the truth of God! I should feel it a great honor, I hope, to be the most common soldier if called upon to defend my country, but I must confess, I should not like to be in the ranks always. I should like, at least, to be made a corporal very soon and a sergeant as soon as possible; and I should grumble wonderfully much, if I could not rise to rank among the commissioned officers! I should like to be found doing my very best, and I would reach to the most prominent position, if I might better serve my country than in the ranks. So I think it should be with the Christian. He is not to seek for honor among men, but, if he can, by getting more grace be more serviceable to his God, and bring more honor to His name, why let him press forward! Ah, my dear brethren, what business have you to be sitting still, and saying, “It is enough.” The “rest-and-be-thankful” policy is not much approved of in politics—and in religion it will never do. On! Forward! Upward! As the eagle takes for its motto, “Superior,” and still mounts higher, and higher, and higher, till the young wing which first trembled at the height has grown into the strong pinion, which makes him companion of the sun, and playmate with the lightning, so let the Christian do! If he has learned to “run and not be weary,” let him seek to “mount up as on the wings of

eagles.” Onward, fellow soldier! Be yet more valiant till your name is written among the first three.

To close, does not this text, as a last practical lesson, show us indirectly, *how a privilege may become a curse?* The Word of God has come to you all. I suppose there is not one here who has not heard the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. You have been told many times that though man has fallen and offended God, yet the Lord has set forth His suffering Son, Christ Jesus, to be a propitiation for sin, and that through faith in His name, “Whoever believes on Him shall never perish.” You have been told that God waits to be gracious, and that whoever looks to Christ shall live, whoever calls upon the Lord shall be saved. Now, having heard this, regardless of what some may tell you, we feel bound as in the sight of God, to warn you, that if this comes “in word only” to you, it will increase your condemnation. Certain preachers think that this word is not “a savor of death unto death” to any, but it is, it is! Whatever their theories, whatever hyper-Calvinistic theology may say, it is God’s Word that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than it shall be for cities like Capernaum and Bethsaida, which heard the word, and yet repented not. You are not machines; you are not creatures merely to be acted upon, you are to act as well as to be moved; and every good word that reaches your ear is written down as a debt against you. There is no declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ which, if refused, does not leave you more disobedient than you were. Remember how the apostle states it—“Unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Now, they could not have been disobedient if it was not their duty to *obey*. No man is disobedient where there is no law.

It is, therefore, the duty of every sinner hearing the gospel to believe it, and if he does not, this same stone shall fall upon him and shall grind him to powder. Kiss the Son, therefore, lest He, lest *He* be angry, and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little. The same Savior who blesses will be angry. He, who loves His people, grows angry with those who reject Him; and when His wrath is kindled but a little, woe unto the object of it!

Blessed are all they who trust in Him, and may we be found among that blessed number to the praise and glory of His grace, wherein He makes us to differ according to the appointment of His own divine will. May God bless this assembly for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## 649 SONGS OF DESOLATE HEARTS – ISA. 54:1

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### A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 10th, 1865,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Sing, O barren, you who did not bear. Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.” — Isaiah 54:1

IT WAS A GREAT SORROW to an eastern woman to be childless. In modern times that affliction is endured with cheerful composure, but in those days, it was regarded as a dreadful curse, and the feelings of those afflicted by it were of the most painful kind, as we find in the case of Hannah. Alas, for human nature, those who were favored with children were often guilty of cruel haughtiness and taunting derision towards those who were not so blessed. We may cite the cases of Peninnah over Hannah and Hagar over her mistress, Sarah. We must, therefore, endeavor to bring our minds to the eastern idea, and we shall then have before us a case of very great, deep, constant, abiding, bitter sorrow, and yet the person in that case is bid to sing and to rejoice aloud, because the visitation of God’s mercy would soon come to make desolation itself glad.

**I.** The text shall first of all be taken in its reference **TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.**

For a long season before the coming of Christ, the Church of God was desolate. Few were her sons and daughters. Her

solemn feast days were attended by a multitude of hypocrites, and her courts were crowded with formalists—the genuine children of Israel were sadly few. And when the Lord, the Husband of the Church, Himself arrived, the Church was in no happy condition; and even while He remained with her, her joy was not complete, for Christ's ministry was, with all reverence to His name— by His own appointment, doubtless— comparatively, an unsuccessful one. After all His preaching, there were but some 120 persons who believed on Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The children of the married wife were but very, very few. Isaiah's wailing might have been heard all through the life of Christ, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor loveliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." What a dark night that must have been when the Savior was betrayed by Judas! Ah, Church of God, what will come of you now? While the Bridegroom was with you, your children were but few, and now that He is taken away to prison and to death, what will you do? As for your sons, you cannot rely upon them. Yonder is Peter, denying his Master with oaths and curses. John—even the loving John—has forsaken Him and fled! They have all gone their ways. They have all turned their backs. Like the children of Ephraim, "Being armed and carrying bows, they have turned their backs in the day of battle."

Alas for you, Zion, for now you are desolate! Your Husband is led away captive; your sons have forsaken you— your hour of mourning has come! Still darker must have been the hour when Salem's daughters wept around the Savior, led away to a shameful crucifixion along the *Via Dolorosa*. See Him as He dyes the streets of Jerusalem with drops of blood

trickling from His thorn-crowned head. He is taken outside the camp to the mount of doom. They fasten Him to the wood. They lift Him high upon the cross—His enemies compass Him about—the bulls of Bashan roar upon Him, and the dogs of hell bark about Him. Where are you now, O Zion? But for a few that cluster around the shameful tree, where are your sons and daughters now? Your sun has set forever, and your candle is gone out in darkness! So unbelief whispers, but not thus speaks the Lord, for after the Lord had been lain in the grave, and risen again, and ascended, and left the Church, then were the days of refreshing, and the times of the visitation of the Spirit! Suddenly, when the saints were met together in an upper room, for they were so few that they could all be enclosed within one room, there was heard a sound as of “a rushing mighty wind,” and suddenly flames of fire sat on each chosen one. Then was fulfilled the saying of the prophet Joel, “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” Rejoice, O Zion! Sing you barren, you that did not bear, for 3,000 are your children in one day, and there are multitudes yet to come! There are added to the Church daily of such as shall be saved; and the multitude increases. Persecution scatters them, but as they scatter they grow—in every land, the Church of God has its sons and daughters. Even in the palace of the Caesars, the truth of God is confessed. Mountains cannot stay the progress of Messiah’s kingdom. Goths and Gauls, uncivilized men of war, feel the potent power of the love of the cross. From eastern coast to western, Jupiter and Venus fall from their thrones, and Jesus Christ is exalted. “From the river even to the ends of the earth,” His name is known! Thus, you see there was to the whole Church at Jerusalem a glorious fulfillment of this text, “Sing, O barren, you that did not bear.” And more were the children of the desolate Church, in the absence of her Lord, than when she

was as a married wife having Jesus Christ the Bridegroom with her!

Although this is a well-known fact, it ought not to be passed over without a little thought, because it is very pleasant to remember that at all seasons when the Church has been desolate, and has become barren, God has appeared to her. In the Dark Ages, when the children of the Church were a little and hidden flock, probably a few monks in monasteries holding a faith which they dared not confess, and feeding it by turning over the Bible in secret, there were also a handful among the mountains of Piedmont, the Albigenses and Waldenses, a few scattered ones among the Nestorians, and a few “even in Sardis” who had not defiled their garments. The poor Church was barren. There were no ministers, but here and there one to preach the gospel, and these were hunted like partridges upon the mountains by those who thirsted for their blood. She might have taken up her wailing, and her heart might have sounded like a harp for her ruin and decay, but in her hour of dire necessity, the Lord appeared to her, and the children of the desolate were suddenly many! The monk of Wirtemberg began to proclaim the gospel. The mighty seer of Geneva stood up and declared the truth of God as it is in Jesus, distinctly enunciating the glorious doctrines of grace. Zwingli, full of fire and energy, led on the saints in Switzerland. It is true the stakes began to flame with their victims—the racks were red with the blood of martyrs, and prisons crowded with the elect of God—but what did it matter? The day was come when God had visited His people, and, as in some desperate fight when suddenly a reinforcement comes with a mighty captain at its head, and every man along the line gathers courage, every coward becomes a hero, and every hero seems gifted with a thousand hands—each hand filled with a two-edged sword—even so it was in that day of struggle and of victory! A song

went up from earth even to heaven, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; His own right hand, and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory!”

Nor has God failed since the days of the Reformation. We in England had gone to sleep. The Church of England was sleeping in the dark. Dissenters were sleeping in the light; that was the only difference between them. There seemed to be no breath of life throughout the whole of England; spiritual death crept over all ministers and all professors. There were, of course, a few exceptions, but those were, alas, so weak, and so isolated, that they could effect but little. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for the egregious crime of praying. Among those young men were three destined to carve their names in everlasting rock—the two Wesleys and George Whitefield. These men, little knowing why they were called, preached the Word, first of all in the regular and orderly fashion, but still with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven! They were driven by persecution to the gross irregularity of preaching in the open air. Blessed day! Whether they stood on the tombstone, and preached to the living from the portals of the grave, or by the mountainside, calling heaven and earth to witness, it mattered not; the gospel had broken from the chains of lethargic propriety; and what a change, my brethren, came over the spirit of the age! “The Lord gave the Word: great was the multitude of them who published it.” The fire came down from heaven like that of old in Pharaoh’s day, and it ran along upon the ground and consumed the enemies of God. Irresistible as the lightning flash, it descended and none could stand against it—for the day of the Lord was come, and it was a day of burning and a day of might, and blessed be the name of God, “the children of the desolate” were many.

Now we know what has been said concerning the Church of God in England at the present time, and here is the practical



lesson I want you to gather. Some of our brothers are perfectly contented, but I cannot number myself among those who think that the Church is flourishing, and that vital godliness is abundant. It may be so, brethren, it may be so. I wish I could thoroughly feel satisfied of it. I would not, however, on the other hand, unite myself altogether with the ranks of the alarmists who say that everything is wrong. The Christian Church, according to some, is nothing but a mass of hypocrisy. We are all going post haste, as fast as ever we can, towards Romanism, and Romanism is next door to the abode of Satan himself. We are supposed to be going down, down, down a most precipitous descent. Well, I do not know; it may be so. I wish I was quite sure it was not so; I hardly think it, but I strike the balance between the two, and rejoice with trembling. On this we may all be agreed—there is an abundant room both for mourning because we have not the presence of God as once we had it, and, on the other hand, for a hopeful anxiety that yet our desolation may be turned into fruitfulness. Supposing—taking the worst view of the case—supposing it is so—and I am sure there is very much truth in the supposition—suppose it is so that the sturdiness with which we once held orthodoxy is giving place to a trifling latitudinarianism [Holding or expressing broad or tolerant views, especially in religious matters]?<sup>1</sup> Suppose it to be true that the enthusiasm, which once made us worthy to be called fanatics, is gradually dwindling down into indifference? Suppose it to be so that the Puritan rigidity of morals, which once made the professing Christian amazing to look upon, is now turning into a looseness and laxity of behavior? Well, then, we are like the barren and desolate woman; but, at any rate, we have a promise still to cling to, and we will hold it fast—“Sing, O barren, you who did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not

travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.”

Doubt not but that the Lord will appear for His Church even yet. Let not your gloomy apprehensiveness cause your hands to hang down, for in your darkest night, God will suddenly light a candle. It may be that He will let wickedness grow ripe, and not send forth the reaper, the ordained man, with the sickle to cut it down, till it is ripe. It may be that He may let iniquity abound, and the love of many may wax cold, but fear not! Though He never is before His time, He never is behind; He will come punctually at the moment, in a time which shall be best for His Church, and most for His own glory! Once again we shall hail the happy days of revival, and the seasons of gladness of heart—when “one shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob,” and the children of Zion “shall spring up as willows by the watercourses.” Let us hope and labor; let us lament our desolation; let us expect the gracious visitation, and it shall yet come, and we shall “sing together,” even *we*, “the waste places of Jerusalem.”

**II.** I now intend to use the text, as God helps me, in reference to **ANY ONE CHURCH**.

I do not think that what I have to say now will have very special reference to the Church which meets in this place, for we have reason to thank God, that through 11 years or more, we have had about as high a flood-tide of revival as we could well endure; and I do not know if God had given us more conversions, what we should have done with them. He has already increased our numbers so marvelously, that we scarcely know how we shall oversee the whole; and it has become almost a matter of necessity that some should swarm off to form other Churches. But still a part of what is said may, nevertheless, apply to our case; and as there are many brethren

here from the country, and yet, since some twenty or thirty thousand will read these words, I shall not speak without having an audience even though not a word may belong to the members of this Church.

Let us observe, then, that *there are some separate Churches which are in a very sad condition and may most truly be said to be barren and desolate*. Do we not know some in our land which are cursed with a lifeless ministry? A ministry which murders the truth of God by a drawling, careless utterance of it? A ministry without force or life? Some ministries are not truthful; they may preach part of the truth, but not the whole—ministries, which, for some reason or other, give prominence to one or two doctrines, while other parts of the truth of God, equally precious, are kept back from the people; and the whole of what is preached is too often delivered in a cold, official, ministerial manner—without passion or earnestness, and so the Church necessarily, I may say, becomes barren. And how many Churches have to complain of worldly Church officers? We cannot help observing with grief and regret that certain Church officers are far more active when they are in the world than they are in the Church, and that if they show some little common sense in conducting their own business, they show little enough in managing Christ's business. They put out both their hands, and all their heart when the matter is one of personal gain, but when it is only that the Church of God may be fed, or that the boundaries of Zion may be enlarged, they go about it as though it were a thing of no consequence, or of very small importance.

And worse than this, for the Church might still live even with a lifeless ministry, and a worldly deaconship and eldership, but often there is a lifeless membership! How many Churches are there where a large portion of members scarcely think of assembling themselves together for supplication? Where, if there is any life, it seems to expend itself in quarrelling and

fault-finding? They do not contend earnestly 1Excerpted from *American Heritage Talking Dictionary*. Copyright © 1997 The Learning Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. for “the faith once delivered to the saints,” against the common foe, but they wrangle over that faith and make foes of one another! Oh, how many Christians there are who can boast of respectability—there are no end of carriages at the door! They can talk of the wealth, the large subscriptions which they can give to God’s cause, but where is their zeal, and the sounding of their hearts over dying men? Where are the tears that move the heart of God? Where are the sighs and cries which bring down a blessing upon the preached Word? Alas, in many of our Churches, echo can only answer to the question, “Where are they?” with the refrain, “Where are they?” for they are gone, and gone so long that some Christians seem content that they should be gone forever! They scarcely remember the time when they were in earnest, the period when the bedewing of the Holy Spirit rested upon them! I hesitate not to say solemnly that I know, in our own denomination, there are many, many Churches in such a state of desolation, if the places where they worship were closed, it would be small loss to the neighborhoods in which they stand. And if the ministry to which they listen were put out and silenced, it might be almost a gain—for it only enables the people to wrap themselves up in the idea that they are all right, and that they have the Spirit of God among them when they have only the name to live and are dead!

This being their present state, brethren present this morning, who are in earnest, will ask me *what is their present duty as members of such Churches?* I reply, brethren, your duty is very plain. Labor to be conscious of the sad barrenness of the Church to which you belong. Has the baptism pool not been stirred for the last five or six years? Will you be easy about that?

Have there been no additions to the Church for many months? Can you be satisfied about that? Do you observe an absence of all earnestness, of all passion and vehemence for the promotion of the Savior's kingdom? Can you be quiet about that? If so, my dear friend, I really cannot say anything to you about what you can do, for it seems to me that you are not the person to whom I ought to appeal in this matter. But I will say, do labor, dear brethren, if you are members of Churches that are not prospering, to be conscious of the sad mischief that you are doing. If the salt has lost its savor, it is therefore good for nothing, it is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, and men cast it out. We can manage to struggle on with a bad trader, for he may make a good politician or philosopher, but a dead Church is good for nothing, good for nothing of any sort or in any way, it is only fit to be cast out. Even the dunghill rejects a dead Church. Oh, if we did but know it, the existence of the devil is not more pretentious of evil than the existence of a Church that has lost spiritual life. Mind, I am not exaggerating, for I have a proof of it. What is the Church of Rome in its deadly operation upon the world, but the greatest curse that could ever come from hell itself? I question if hell can find a more fitting instrument within its infernal lake than the Church of Rome is for the cause of mischief. And your Church will, in its measure, be the same if bereft of the Spirit. I do not care if it is Wesleyan, Baptist, Independent, or what it is—when the life is gone, *it becomes good for nothing*—it is not even fit to fertilize the ground, as the contents of the dunghill are, but men cast it out and tread it under foot. Get conscious of that, and then let those of you who are humbled in the sight of God, meet together and spread the case before the Lord. We ought to have great faith in the power of the twos and threes, for, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,” says the Lord.

The long thin red line, which has often won the battle, will yet win it in England—I mean the thin line of the few who sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church. If you, my brother, an earnest man, are the only member of the Church that does really sigh and cry before God, God intends to bless that Church yet—for He has already blessed it in sending you to it! Look out for others of a kindred sort, and without murmuring, without raising divisions, without seeking to expel the minister or make any changes in the discipline, just set to work, and pray down, as Elijah did, the fire from heaven upon the sacrifice. This is the one thing which is needed. The wrong in organization, the mistakes in government, the unfitness of the Church officers—all this will come right enough if you once get the divine life; but without this, though you should rectify everything else, you would have done but little to any real purpose. Let me beg of you, therefore, to spread the case before Jehovah, and be sure that you look away from everything that you, yourself, can do, and look to Him, and to Him alone. What can the barren woman do? What can she who is desolate do? Why, she can take this promise before God and say, “You have said, ‘Sing, O barren’—Lord, make me sing! You have said, ‘The children of the desolate shall yet be many’—Lord make our children many!” The desolate woman can do this, and your poor desolate heart, though you sigh and cry over the fewness of the congregation and the coldness of the Church members—your desolate heart can do the same! And doing it, you shall get an answer of peace. But mind you, do not pray without proving the sincerity of your prayers by *action*. Do bestir yourself, I have noticed that many who complain of a lack of brotherly love are just the people who have least themselves; and those who see no spiritual life in a Church are often the people who have no spiritual life themselves. They see outside what they see within.

But I hope I am addressing myself to nobler men than these. You feel that you would not willfully and willingly make any false accusation against God's saints, nor impeach them for anything in which they are not guilty. You love the Church too well; you would rather paint her with your finger upon her spots, than magnify her blemishes. Well, dear brethren, if such is your state of heart, live and labor for Jesus Christ yourselves, and give the Lord no rest till this Word of His servant Isaiah is fulfilled to the very letter! This, my message, may seem to be of no importance to some here present, yet I hope it may be filled with usefulness to Churches represented here by gracious and godly men and women.

**III.** By your leave, we will now turn to a third use of our text. Here the case is before us—**THE POOR HELPLESS SINNER HAS HIS CASE WELL DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHET AS BARREN AND DESOLATE.**

I will speak for you, and you will recognize your own words. "Barren! Ah, that I am. I have not one meritorious fruit that I can bring before God. As well might one expect to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, as to find any good thing in me. My heart is a fountain of polluted waters, and all that comes forth deserves to be called Marah! Marah—for every drop is bitter. How is it possible that *I* can ever hope, while I see in myself all that is evil and nothing that is good? Alas, I am not only barren of merit, but I am also barren of feeling; I ought to be humbled on account of sin, but I am not; my eyes ought to be perpetual conduits of tears, but they are dry; my heart should be like Moses' rock when it was smitten, but alas, it is a flinty rock yielding no water. O that my heart would break. O that I were truly contrite. Unto the contrite and broken heart the Lord will have regard, but I am barren even of that, and alas, I seem to be barren even in prayer. If I get upon my knees, I cannot pray! 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,'

is as far as I can reach; and I am afraid I am so barren that I cannot even pray that prayer as the publican prayed it, so as to get acceptance. I come down from my closet with the sense that I have tried to pray, but that I have been so distracted both with doubts and with wandering thoughts, that I have rather multiplied my sins than had any prevalence with God. I am commanded to believe in Jesus, and I wish I could exert faith in Him—

‘O could I but believe!  
Then all would easy be;  
I would, but cannot, Lord, believe—  
My help must come from Thee!’

I have a will, but I have no power. I can say, “To will is present with me”—and I am thankful to God for that—but ‘how to perform that which I would, I find not.’ I am barren of merit, barren of feeling, barren of power, barren of prayer, barren of faith. I am barren—barren with a vengeance.”

Yes, and sinner, it is very probable that I can *also* speak out your heart if I take the word, “*desolate*.” You are desolate, too—no one can comfort you. The friend to whom you told your trouble, tried his best, but he could not succeed in cheering your heavy heart. You have been up to this house, sometimes, hoping that I might say a word, but I have only added fuel to the flame, for the truth preached has been far from comfortable to you; it has rather depressed you and brought you still lower. You have listened, you have read good books, you have turned over Scripture, but for all that, there does not seem to be a text that speaks comfortably to you, but the threats leap up out of the page, and seem as if they would drag you down, as the dogs drag down the stag when they seize him for their prey. You are “desolate” as a poor lone wanderer who has lost his way far out



in the desert. He looks around upon the horizon, and sees not one single hope or gleam of hope, but far above he sees the cruel vulture, waiting for his lifeless corpse. So it is with you—you see the vultures of hell ready to devour you, and there is no hope, no comfort whatever. You are barren and you are desolate. I will tell you one of your thoughts. You have often envied those whom you would not envy if you knew better. You poor barren souls have often envied “the married wife.” I mean the Pharisee—you have said of him, “Ah, I wish I could say that I was not as other men are; I wish I could say I had not sinned, but had walked in righteousness—‘All these things have I kept from my youth up’—O that I could say that!” You have heard these married wives, as it were, boast of all their goodness, and you have looked at them and thought, “What blessed people they must be. O that I could see what they can see!” There are some about in the world who preach up human ability, who tell us that men can believe and can repent, and can do all sorts of spiritual actions; and there are some who think they can do them irrespective of the Holy Spirit. Well, then, I do not doubt but what you envy them; you say, “I wish I could feel as so-and-so; I wish I could rejoice as so-and-so does. Oh, if I could get as good a hope as he has.” Harken to this, he is a hypocrite! “Oh, that I could be as full of peace as he is!” Mark, he is a mere formalist. “Oh, that I had his unbroken peace!” If you had such peace as he has, it would be your eternal ruin!

Poor, barren sinner let me say this much to you. Your help is to be found, not in your barrenness, not in your desolation; do not look to that as though it could help you; your barrenness is barrenness forever if left to itself, and your desolation is utter and helpless unless someone shall intervene. May I ask you to look at the chapter which precedes my text? I wish the Bible had never been chopped up into chapters at all, it spoils it so; it was not intended by the Holy Spirit that it should be—that is

a human device. If you read it right on, you see how it runs—“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” You know how it continues till it gets to this—“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Sing, O barren, you who did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child.”

Do you see the drift of it? Jesus has taken the sinner’s sin upon Himself, and made a complete atonement; therefore, “Sing, O barren.” The mighty Redeemer has come out of His dwelling place, and has fought the enemy, and won the victory. “Sing, O barren.” Sin can be pardoned now, for Christ has died. “Sing, O barren!” Sinfulness can be conquered now, for Christ has won the victory over the hosts of hell. You barren one! All barren as you are, stand here and see that wondrous sight. He comes from Edom “with garments dyed in blood.” Can you see the blood upon His garments? It is red as though He had trod the wine vats. Can you see that blood? It is the blood of all your sins. They are gone! They are gone! O desolate! They are gone! The blood of all your foes—they are slain! O barren woman! They are slain! And now, He who vanquished hell, comes. Can He not rescue you? “The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered.” And though you stood bound in iron, surrounded with darkness about you like that of Egypt, “which night was felt,” He could set you free—

“He comes the prisoners to release,  
In Satan’s bondage held.  
The gates of brass before Him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.”

Your hope is in a bleeding Savior who is now ascended up on high to receive gifts for men! Surely I myself will lead the strain, while I ask you now, you barren ones, to sing. Break forth into singing and cry aloud, for your Redeemer is mighty and will save. Whereas you envied the Pharisee, you shall have greater joy than he. “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife.” Whereas you envied the proud man who said, “I can do this, and I can do the other,” you who could do nothing because you were so barren, shall be filled with such love, and endowed with such grace—you shall be admitted into such familiarity with Christ, such oneness with God, such glory with Him forever— that your joy, your glory, shall be far greater than the married wife could claim. I pray the sinner, as he hears these gladsome words, to be obedient to them. Trust in the Savior, and “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

**IV.** Does not this text, in the fourth place, belong to the **DEPRESSED BELIEVER?**

Here, as before, I can speak experientially. Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I, though we have brought forth some fruit unto His name, and are still confident that we are “plants of His own right hand planting,” yet sometimes feel very barren. I hope *you* do not feel it as often as I do. There are occasions when, having preached to others, I have to examine myself, “lest I myself should be a castaway.” I would, if I could, always weep for the sins, and for the ruin of rebellious men. I

would always feel tenderness of heart on account of those who reject His great salvation, but sometimes I am barren of all this; I feel my heart cold as a stone, and hard as a rock. Do you ever feel, when you try to pray—you who have nearest access to God—that there are times when you *cannot* pray? You would wrestle with the angel, but it is as much as ever you can say, “Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief.” You want to love Christ, but instead of a furnace of love, you can only find a spark in your soul. Oh, how you want to burn! How you desire to grow, to mount, to reach to something higher and better than this poor dead level of a mere profession—but you cannot get up to it. O dew of heaven, water my dry branch! O river of God, flow hard by my poor barren roots! For if not, I shall be always barren! Have you not often felt desolate? I know the righteous man never is desolate, but still he sometimes *thinks* himself so; his soul abhors all manner of meat, and he refuses to be comforted. He was no bad man who said, “I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop,” for those who have looked the sun in the face have, nevertheless, sometimes had to say, “Look not on me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” Depressions of spirit, humiliating thoughts of one’s self, deep and grievous bondage—all these the children of God are well aware of; with Paul we have, at times, to cry, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Beloved, it is well for us to know, as I am sure we do know experientially, that in this matter of barrenness and desolation, the creature can do but little. It is the Spirit who quickens—the flesh profits little. When we get into this state, we feel like a man who cannot swim; and the more we kick and struggle, the more rapidly we sink. It seems as if all human energy were but the energy to sin, and a power to make us yet more dead to true spiritual life. Well, what are we to do, then? Why, let us

remember that the text is addressed to us in just such a state. “Sing, O barren, break forth and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child.” But what can I sing about? I cannot sing about the present; I cannot even sing concerning the past. Well, but yet I can sing of Jesus Christ, can I not? I can turn to that which precedes the text, and I can sing of visits which the Redeemer has before paid to me; or, if not of these, I can sing of the great love with which He loved His people when He came from the heights of heaven for their redemption. I will go to the cross again. Come, my soul, heavy laden you were once, and you did lose your burden there. Come again, come again! Once you did wash in yonder fount, and you were clean. O my poor bespattered spirit, come and wash again. A prodigal I once returned; He fell upon my neck and kissed me then. I will go to Jesus yet once more. Though my sins rise like mountains, I will be obedient to the Word which says, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.”

What is my barrenness? It is the platform for His divine power! What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of His everlasting love! I will go in poverty. I will go in helplessness. I will go in all my shame and backsliding. I will tell Him that I am still His child, and in confidence in His faithful heart, I, even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud. Beloved, I think this is a very delightful text for us to think upon—especially when we remember that the joy of hardened hearts is, by-and-by, greater than the joy of those who never did feel their barrenness so much. There are some Christians who seem to be like the married wife; they have an equable temperament, they are not much depressed, they keep the even tenor of their way. I know I often envy them. We have our ups and downs, but mark you, when our ups come, those who despised us when we were in the downs might very well envy

us. Though the valleys are dark and very gloomy, yet oh, the hilltops! The hilltops are so bright that when the Lord makes our feet to stand upon our high places, we no longer envy the married wife with all her ordinary calm and peace. We will take our trails for the sake of our joys—for as our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound in Christ Jesus.

**V.** And now, lastly, it strikes me that our text ought to have a very special voice **TO THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DOING GOOD.**

As a Church, I am sure it is our unanimous desire that we might bring forth spiritual children unto Christ Jesus. I hope I have not a single member of this Church who is content to go to heaven alone. As far as I know you, I believe there is commonly among you this desire—that you may bring sinners to Christ. Now, it is possible that some dear brethren present have not yet been successful. You have been at work. You have been in prayer; you have depended upon Christ in simple faith, and hoped for His Spirit, but you still have been denied the happy privilege of being made useful. Well, now, two or three words to you. You are barren and I am glad that while you are barren, your heart feels desolate, for you will not be barren long if you are unhappy in your barren state. Now, my dear friends, it may be possible that you are only barren in your own esteem. It is possible that God may have blessed you to many, though you think He has never blessed you to one. There may be, somewhere, precious jewels which you first brought up from the depths of sin—though *you* have not seen them glisten, Christ has, and though you thought you did not succeed the other day in your attempt, it is just possible that you are not a good judge of your own success. Frequently, I have gone home groaning over a sermon which God has blessed to never-dying souls; and those very discourses which I have thought the worst of, God has blessed the most. I think we are not to be judges

of how we do our work—the Master knows better than we do the success of our enterprises. Beside, dear friends, you do not expect to see fruit at once, do you? “Cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it *tomorrow*”—is that the text? If I read rightly, it is, “You shall find it after *many days*.” You have not had your “many days” to wait yet. The farmer, when he plants corn, may plow in October or November, but he does not expect to have a harvest in January! He will wait till the season comes. And you farmers of the Lord, must wait and be patient for the precious fruits of your toil—“In due season you shall all reap if you faint not.” Therefore, wait on.

Perhaps, however, your barrenness really is true, and if so, ought not this to greatly humble you? You were not always barren, my brethren—when you were fruitful, did you give God all the glory? Were you very careful not to say, “Well done, I”? Possibly this barrenness has come upon you to make you feel your nothingness, and to qualify you for yet greater success; it often happens that before God means to bless His servants, He depresses them greatly. Whether or not it is absolutely necessary, I cannot tell, but this I know, it is generally the rule that there is a flogging behind the door for the man whom God means to honor in public. He will give him a thorn in the flesh either before or after He gives him marvelous revelations. Dear friend, perhaps this is the reason. “Well,” you say, “I do not know what the reason is, but I wish I could be rid of it, for I cannot bear to be useless, to be a tree cumbering the ground.” My dear brother, I am thrice glad to hear you say that, because now that you are really ashamed of being barren, you will soon be fruitful. And now that God makes you *loathe* to be without fruit, He will soon cover you with precious clusters. One thing is certain—you cannot alter your being barren; you cannot, *yourself*, change your barrenness into fruitfulness; but is it not significant that my text should stand just after the passage to

which I have invited your attention just now? Just after the story of the despised and rejected Savior, stands this note of joy for you poor barren ones! Let me invite you, then, to come to the cross! Perhaps that very cross, which gave you life, may give you fruitfulness. You have found help there before—may you not find vigor there now?

Brethren—my fellow workers for Christ Jesus—let us look up and view the flowing of the Savior's precious blood. Let us see the chastisement of our peace as it falls in cruel blows upon His blessed shoulders. Let us see the scourging. Let us mark the drops of blood as they roll down to the ground, and what do we feel but this?—

“Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain, I count my loss,  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His cross.  
Yes, and I must and will esteem  
All things but loss for Jesus' sake—  
O may my soul be found in Him,  
And of His righteousness partake.”

O beloved, there is nothing like a sight of the Savior. I have heard of a minister who was ready to give up his work, but he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw the thorn-crowned Redeemer reaping with a sweat of blood upon His face. The crucified One said to him, as He saw him standing idly by, “Could you not reap with Me one hour?” He seized a sickle and worked on and on, and on, with the crucified One at his side, and his strength grew as he continued at his work. O servants of God, will you depart from your work when the pierced hands are at your side? Courage, my brethren, courage! We cannot fail, for Christ is with us; and we must not cease, for



Jesus ceases not. Together let us praise our Lord that He has sent us this morning such a promise to gird about our loins to make us strong even to the end. “Sing, O barren, you who did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud you who did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.”

The Lord grant it may be so to us for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

# **650 JUDGMENT THREATENING, BUT MERCY SPARING – LUKE 13:7-8**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 17th, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Cut it down; why does it use up the ground? But he  
answered and said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also.”—  
Luke 13:7-8**

THE COMPARISON of a man to a tree and of human works to fruit is exceedingly common in Scripture, because it is most suggestive, natural, and appropriate. As fruit is the production of the tree's life, and the end for which the tree exists, so obedience to the divine will, and holiness unto the Lord should be the product of man's life, and for it he was at first created. When men plant trees in a vineyard, they very naturally expect to find fruit on them, and if at the age and season of fruit bearing they find no produce, their natural and justifiable expectation is disappointed. Even thus, speaking after the manner of men, it is natural that the great Maker of all should look for the good fruit of obedience and love, from the men who are the objects of His providential care, and be grieved when He meets with no return. Man is very much more God's property than a tree can ever be the property of the man who plants a vineyard; and as God has spent so much more skill and wisdom in the creation of a man, than a farmer can have spent in the mere planting of trees, it becomes the more natural that

God should look for fruit from His creature, man; and the more reasonable that His most righteous requirements should not be refused. Trees that bear no fruit must be cut down; and sinners, who bear no repentance, faith, and holiness, must die. It is only a matter of time, as to whether or not the vineyard shall be cleared of the encumbrance of its barren trees; it is but a matter of time, as to when the world shall be delivered from the burdensome presence of barren souls. It stands to reason that barren trees, which soon become the haunts of all sorts of mischievous creatures, should be a nuisance to the vineyard; neither can sinners be permitted forever to become the dwelling places of evil spirits and the dens of iniquity—a thorough riddance must be made of impenitent sinners as well as of rotten trees. There is a time for felling fruitless trees, and there is an appointed season for hewing down and casting into the fire the useless sinner.

I. We shall not linger on the threshold of our solemn work this morning, for our burden is very heavy, and we would be rid of it speedily. We shall address ourselves at once, to those persons who are living without God and without Christ, among whom many of my hearers must be numbered. We shall speak to those who are not saved—there are such in the professing church everywhere. O may the Holy Spirit find them out by our word, and bring them in real earnest to consider their ways. To all unprofitable, unfruitful sinners, we utter this hard, but necessary sentence—**TO CUT YOU DOWN WOULD BE MOST REASONABLE**. It is right and reasonable to fell barren trees, and it is just as right and reasonable, that *you* should be cut down.

1. This will appear in the first place, if we reflect, that *this is the shortest and the surest way to deal with you*; it will cost the least trouble, and be most certainly effectual, in removing you from the place to which you are an injury, rather than a benefit.

When the owner of the vineyard says to the gardener concerning the tree, “Cut it down,” the remedy is very sharp, but it is very simple. The felling is soon done, the clearance is thorough—and when another tree is planted, the benefit is evident. To dig about the tree, to trench it, to feed it, to prune it, and water it—all this takes time—requiring care and labor and attention— and after all that, the process may fail, and love’s labor may be lost. To spare is difficult and involves trouble; to cut down is easy and effectual. Unconverted hearer, to preach the gospel to you, to call you to repentance, to entreat, exhort, instruct, and warn you, is a laborious process, and will probably be unsuccessful, after all. The work will require much thought; providential agencies must be directed with wisdom, saints must pray with earnestness, ministers must plead with tears, the Scriptures must be written, and those Scriptures must be expounded and explained; all this is more than you have any natural right to expect that God should do with you, when He has in His hands a far simpler remedy by which He may at once ease Himself of His adversary, and prevent your being any further offense— He has but to take away your breath, and permit your body to descend into the grave, and your soul into hell, and the vineyard is clear and there is room for another tree. This sharp, short, simple process is one which commends itself to men in the case of trees, and it is one in which it is a thousand wonders that the Lord has not used with you! There will be no more blaspheming God, sinner, when the axe has laid you low! There will be no more rejecting the promise of His mercy; no more violating Sundays; no more despising Scripture, when the day of doom arrives; death shall end all these abominations forever! We shall no more have to agonize for you in vain, no more shall we weep bitterly because of your hardness of heart—no longer study to meet your objections, and sigh at your constant oppositions. The flames of hell will end all this,

to your sad and awful cost; no longer will a long-suffering God be wearied with your sins, and pressed down under the load of your iniquities. He will make short work in righteousness, and a clean work, too. He will sweep you away with the broom of destruction, and your rebellions will end, and your iniquities will receive a reward most sure and terrible! Barren fig tree, you will draw the fatness from the ground no longer, and overshadow with evil influence your fellow trees no more! You have become a mere waste and worse than a waste. Sinner, I ask you, is not the readiest plan to be rid of you suggested by the text, “Cut it down”? You yourself would do thus with a tree; what reason is there why the Lord should not deal thus with you?

Do you argue that you are of far greater importance than a tree? How do you figure this? A tree is far more valuable to you, than you can be supposed to be to the infinite God. The gardener would possibly lose something by cutting down his tree—but how can you suppose that your ruin would be any damage to the great God? The man who has many acres of vineyard, is not much distressed if one barren vine is cut down, for there are so many more; if God had but one man in His dominions, it might seem to be very important whether that man were saved or not—but there are so many of our race that your loss will be no more than the blowing of one atom of sand from the shore, or the removal of one drop from the sea! You yourself could not well complain of being cut down, for you do not think much of your own soul—you are not concerned about its salvation; you trifle with its best interests. Why should you expect another to value you at a higher rate than you have set upon yourself? You fling away your soul for passing joys; you neglect the great salvation; you live in daily disobedience against God, who alone can do you good. Even the preaching of the gospel, that all-powerful engine, seems to have no effect

upon you, because you despise yourself. Well, man, if God despises you, too, and commands His angels to cut you down, you cannot complain—it is but reasonable that God should estimate you at your own price, and weigh you in your own balances. You have wantonly used the axe to yourself on many occasions; why should not the proper executioner use it in earnest? Some men ruin their health by their sins; they wildly dash the axe against their own roots, and wound themselves terribly. On your soul you are using that axe continually—for you damage it by sin, and seek out folly, and the way to damnation, and labor to be lost. You cannot, therefore, complain. The crushing of you will be of no more consequence in this great universe, than the killing of some one ant upon the hill. You will never be missed! You may think greatly of yourself, but you are no more than a mere worm compared with the great universe of God. Beware, O rebellious, unrepentant sinner! My love yearns for your salvation, but my reason approves of your ruin, foresees it, and expects it speedily, unless you turn unto the Lord and live.

2. Another reason makes the argument for judgment very powerful, namely, *that sufficient time for repentance has already been given you*. If there had been any hope of your repentance, I think many of you would have repented long ago. I do not know what can be done for some of you more than has been done; you have been dug about—the digging, I suppose, is to loosen the roots of their hold upon the earth; and you have had affliction, trial and trouble—like the gardener’s great spade—to wean you from earth, and loosen your hold of carnal things. You have had sickness—you have tossed to and fro upon the bed of pain; you have been in the jaws of death, and the horrid teeth seemed above and beneath you, as though they would enclose you forever—but all this has been of no avail. Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and

more; already some of you have been smitten, until your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, but you will not hear the rod. By the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, the heart is made better, but in your case it has not been so. Those blue wounds of yours— those great and grievous afflictions—have not been sanctified to you, but rather you have gone on offending God, and provoking the Most High.

The gardener spoke of feeding as well as of digging, and some of you have had plentiful helps toward repentance. The gospel has been put close by your roots hundreds of times; you have a Bible in every house; you have had, some of you, the advantage of godly training from your youth up; you have been warned again, and again, and again, sometimes sternly, sometimes affectionately; you have heard the wooing voice of mercy, and the thundering notes of judgment; but yet, though Jesus Christ's own gospel has been laid close to your roots, O barren tree, you are barren still! What is the use then, of sparing you? Sparing has been tried, and it has had no effect—the other remedy is certain—“*Cut it down.*” O, God, cut not down the sinner! And yet, we dare not say it would be unreasonable, but on the contrary, the most natural result of slighted mercy. O sinner, you may well say—

“I have long withstood His grace,  
Long provoked Him to His face;  
Would not hearken to His calls,  
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.  
Depths of mercy! Can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me?  
Can my God His wrath forbear?  
Me, the chief of sinners spare?”

3. Sinner, I argue your case somewhat harshly, you think. Ah, man, would God I could make you think me harsh, if you would but have pity on your own soul, for my harshness is only apparent, not real, and your carelessness for your soul is real harshness, for you care not for your own soul, but treat it as a thing to be cast away, and its ruin to be laughed at, as though it were contemptible. *And all this while there has been no sign of improvement whatever in you.* If there had been some little fruit, if some tears of repentance had been flowing from your eyes, if there had been some seeking after Christ, if your heart had been a little softened, if you had but a little faith in Jesus, though it were but as a grain of mustard seed, then there were, indeed, reasons for sparing you; but, sorrowful to add, *your sparing has had an ill effect upon you.* Because God has not punished you, therefore you have waxed wanton and bold; you have said, “Does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” You think that He is altogether such a one as you are, and that He will never bring you into judgment. You fancy that His sword is rusted into the scabbard, and His arm waxed short. Strange madness of evil that you should pervert the longsuffering, which calls you to repentance, into a reason for running to greater lengths of sin! What? When Jehovah spares you that you may turn to Him, shall that very sparing make you lift up the foot of your rebellion and spurn Him? It has done so. Up to this time, you have grown hardened instead of softened; you have grown older, but you are no wiser, except it be with Satan’s subtlety to be wiser in sin.

The gospel has not now the effect it once had on you. This voice could make your soul shiver, and your very blood chill in its veins, but it cannot do so now. These eyes have sometimes looked on you and seemed as though they flashed with fire—but now, they are dull as lead to you. Once, when we spoke to you of the wrath to come, the tears would flow—there were



some tears of gentle pity for your own soul. But ah, it is not so with you now! You will go your way and our most earnest tones will seem but as the whistling wind, and our most persistent entreaties as a child's playful song. O God, it is reasonable, indeed, that You should lift up that sharp axe of Yours and say, "Cut it down." I think I could abundantly justify the severity of God, if now He were to use it, when I thus perceive that all His sparing has had no effect but to make you worse, when I perceive that, notwithstanding these years of waiting, there are no tokens of improvement in you. If He says, "Cut it down," justice and reason say, "Yes, Lord, it is well it should be so."

4. But there are other reasons why, "Cut it down," is most reasonable, *when we consider the owner and the other trees*. First of all, *here is a tree which brings forth no fruit whatever, and, therefore is of no service*. It is like money badly invested, bringing in no interest; it is a dead loss to the owner. What is the use of keeping it? The dead tree is neither useful nor ornamental—it can yield no service, and afford no pleasure. Cut it down, by all means. And even so with you, sinner; what is the use of you? You are of use to your children, to your family; in business you may be of some service to the world; but then, the world did not make you; and your children, and your family—they did not create you. God has made you, God has planted you, God is your proprietor—you have done nothing for God. Even in coming up to His house today, you did not come with any desire to honor Him; and tomorrow, if you should chance to give something to the poor, it will not be because they are God's, nor out of love to Him. You neither pray to God, nor praise God, nor live for God; you live for anything, for everything, for nothing, sooner than live for the God Who made you. Then what is the good of you to God? All His other creatures praise Him. There is not a spider spinning its web from leaf to leaf but does His bidding. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but

you do not know. Would you keep a horse that never did you service? Would you have a dog in your house that never licked your hand or fawned upon you, or did your will? You would say, “What is the good of this, a servant in my house to feed upon my bread, to be clothed with my bounty, and yet never to obey me, but to live in constant reckless disregard of my most reasonable commands?” You would say to such a servant, “Get out! You are no servant of mine.” Well might the Lord say this to you! All these years preserving goodness has winked at the past; longsuffering has borne with your follies and your faults, but it cannot be so forever, for reason demands that a useless thing should not always stand, and “Cut it down,” is the natural inference from the uselessness of your life.

Nor is this all. While you have been thus living without yielding anything, *you have been a very costly tree*. The tree in the vineyard does not cost much except to dig about it, and to feed it, and to prune it. There is, of course, the expense of the gardener who has to watch over it, but this is very little. You may let the barren tree stand, for it is no great expense; but see what it costs to keep you! You have to be daily fed. The breath in your nostrils must come from God every moment. There has to be an emanation from omnipotence at every single tick of that clock, or else you would not live. The complicated machinery of the human body needs to be tended and kept in order by the great Master Craftsman, or else before long, the cogs would cease to act upon one another, and the wheels would be broken, and the whole machine would be put out of gear. Your body is a mass of thousands of strings—and fails, if one is gone. The good harpist must watch with diligent care to prevent the strings from snapping. You cost God much patience, much bounty, much skill, much power. Why should He spare you? What is there in you that He should go on with you in this manner? You would not spare the gnat that was

always stinging you, buzzing in your face, and every moment insulting you. If it cost you much of your poor gold to spare that poor gnat's life, you would not be long about it—you would crush it! And oh, it is a marvel that Jehovah does not deal thus with *you*, for you are more impertinent than that gnat could be! Sinner, if you were in God's place, and were as ill-treated by your creature as the Lord is by you, would you lavish love and goodness upon him to receive hardness of heart and rebellion in return? Assuredly not! Judge, then, whether it is not right that the Lord should say, "Cut it down."

But there is a worse consideration, namely, that *all this while you have been filling up space which somebody might have been filling to the glory of God*. Where that barren tree stands, there might have been a tree loaded with fruit. You are using up the ground, as the text says, that is, doing nothing but just being a cumbersome nuisance. If another mother had those children, she would pray for them, and weep over them, and teach them of Christ, but you do no such thing. If another man had that money, it would be laid out for God's glory, but you lay it out for your own pleasure, and forget the God who gave it to you! If another had sat in that seat which you occupy, it may be that he had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes; but you, like the men of Capernaum, have been hardened, instead of being softened under the gospel. It may be, man of influence, if another had stood where you have stood in the world's judgment, he would have led hundreds in the path of right, but you, standing there, have done no such thing. Oh, if another had your gifts, young man, he would not be making a company laugh at the tavern, but pleading with all his might for Jesus! If another had but your gifts of utterance, he would be spending time in prayer, and teaching what you now spend in fun and frolic, to make amusement for fools. Oh, if another had that time to live in, he would live in earnest for his Master! If that

young saint, just going through the flood, had your health and vigor, how would he spend and be spent! I recollect a minister of Christ who had but one talent, but much heart. I remember hearing him pray this prayer—“O God, I wish I had ten talents, that I might serve You better.” When I think of some that have them, and do not serve my Master with them, I am inclined to pray, “Lord take away their ten talents, and trust me with them if You will, for I do desire to have something more to lay out for You.” Take heed, O my dear, but sinful hearer, lest the Lord remove you suddenly, and fill up your place with one who will be obedient to His will.

Moreover, and to make bad worse, even to the worst degree—*all this while ungodly men are spreading an evil influence.* Thinking over the two lines of the verse we have been singing, I felt a horror of great darkness, as I realized fully their solemn truthfulness with regard to some of you—

“I have shed His precious blood,  
Trampled on the Son of God;  
Filled with pains unspeakable  
I who yet am not in hell.”

Well may the question arise—

“Why to me this waste of love?”

It is so apparently a waste of long-suffering and mercy, that some transgressors should be spared at all, that they may well marvel. Look at it, and I think you will see it very clearly—*the very fact that God does not punish sin on the spot is mischievously interpreted.* Men in all ages have drawn a wicked inference from the patience of the great Judge. The preacher, in Ecclesiastes, says, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed

speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” “Why,” you say, “So-and-So drinks and swears, and he has lived to be a hale, hearty old man! He has plunged into all sorts of folly and wickedness; he was a thief and everything bad besides, and yet he prospers in the world, and grows rich, instead of God sinking him down at once to hell, He has favored him, and fattened him as a bullock in rich pasture.” “Oh,” the worldling says, “there is no justice in God; He does not punish sin!” The very fact that you are spared, O, sinner, is doing mischief in the world. Do you see that? Your mere existence in this world is to others an inducement to continue in sin; for while you are spared, others look at you and say, “God has not punished him.” Therefore, they infer that He will not punish sin at all.

Moreover, how many there are of you *whose example is fearfully contagious*—whose lips and lives combine to lead your associates astray from God. In this dreadful disease which has ravaged our fields and destroyed the cattle, farmers have been advised, as soon as ever the cow is attacked with the disease, to kill it on the spot, and bury it five feet deep out of the way. Let us reflect that the disease of sin is much more pestilential and more certain to kill, than this disease among the cattle, and therefore stern justice cries, “Let the sinner be at once sent where He cannot increase the plague of iniquity—it is of no use sparing him—he grows no better; all the means used only make him worse, and meanwhile we must look to the welfare of others, lest he perish not alone in his iniquity. He teaches his children to swear; he makes others worldly; the whole current of his life is to incite men to rebel against God—let his desperate course be stopped at once. The leprosy is upon him and all that he touches he pollutes—for high sanitary reasons, therefore, he must be removed.” It is better that one die than that many should be smitten, and therefore, the highest

consideration for the good of mankind in general, renders it necessary that the mandate should go forth, “Cut it down.”

**II.** Our second most solemn work is to remind you, O impenitent sinner, that **FOR GOD TO HAVE SPARED YOU SO LONG IS A VERY WONDERFUL THING.** That the infinitely just and Holy God should have spared you, unconverted man, unconverted woman, up till now, is no small thing, but a matter for adoring wonder.

Let me show you this. Consider, *negatively*, *God is not sparing you because He is insensible towards your sins*—He is angry with the wicked every day. If the Lord could be indifferent towards sin, and could bring His holy mind to treat it as a mere trifle, then it would be no wonder that He should let the transgressor live. But He cannot endure iniquity—all the day long His anger smokes and burns towards evil, and yet, He holds back the thunderbolt, and does not smite the guilty. If *you* had been angry for half-an-hour, you would have come to hard words or blows; but here is the Judge of all the earth, angry every day for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years with some of you, and yet, He has not destroyed you! *It is not because the offense is at a distance*, and therefore, far from His observant eyes. No—your sins are like smoke in His nose—your iniquities provoke Him to His face; you touch the apple of His eye, and yet, for all that, though this accursed thing called sin intrudes into His presence every instant, yet still, He has spared you until now. Mark, sinner, He has spared you *not because He was unable to have destroyed you*. He might have bid the tiles fall from the roof, or the fever might have killed you in the street; the air might have refused to heave your lungs, or the blood might have ceased its circulation in your veins. The gates to death are many. The quiver of judgment is full of sharp arrows. The Lord has but to will it and your soul is required of you. He said to the foolish rich man, “This night your soul shall be

required of you,” and he never saw the morning; and He might as easily have sent the same sad message to you; *and what then?* As I have said before, this great patience is not manifested towards your sinful soul because the Lord is at all dependent upon you—your living will not increase and your dying will not diminish His glory. You will be no more missed than one dry leaf is missed in a forest, or one dewdrop in a thousand leagues of grass. Judgment needs but a word to work its utmost vengeance, and though you are so provoking, the marvel is that divine severity has spared you so long! Admire and wonder at this long-suffering.

Remember that this wonder is increased, when you *think of the fruit He deserved to have had of you*. A God so good and so gracious ought to have been loved by you. He has treated you so well, and given you such capacities for pleasure, that He ought to have had some service of you. You are not to God precisely what the ox is to its owner—you give to the ox but his grass or his straw, and you have done with him; but God gives to you, not only your daily food, but your very life—you are wholly dependent upon Him. Nothing can be so much yours as you are God's. You ought to have served Him, to have delighted in that service, to spend and to have been spent for your Lord. He asks no more of you than He ought to have had, and yet, He asks you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength—this was His first and great commandment—but this you have constantly, persistently broken. Oh, think, then, when you have given to God such a bad return, when He ought to have received so much better—think, I pray you, how you must have provoked Him!

And ah, my hearers! I have to touch upon a very solemn part of the business now, when I notice again that some, perhaps here present, *have been guilty of very God-provoking sins*. Some offenses provoke God much more than others—I

believe that cursing does, for it is wanton insolence, by which nothing can be gained. It is altogether a gratuitous piece of insult. To swear, to invoke the curse of God upon one's limbs and souls, is an unnecessary, superfluous sin. There cannot be any pleasure in pronouncing oaths, any more than in uttering any other form of words. It is just because man *will* hate his Maker, and will provoke Him, that he does this. O sinner, did you ever ask God to damn you, and are you not astonished that He has not done it? Did you ever desire that the blast should come upon you, and do you not marvel that He has not long ago swept you where His wrath would wither you forever? Swearing is a sin that provokes the Most High! O sinner, abhor this most detestable of vices!

*Infidelity*; and how many are guilty of that? How provoking to God for a man to deny His very existence! Standing up and breathing God's air, and living upon God's life, and yet saying that there is no God? An insignificant worm dares challenge the Almighty to prove His Godhead and existence by a tremendous act of justice. This is a God-provoking sin.

So again is *persecution*. There may be some here present, who have persecuted wife and child because of their following Christ. "He who touches you touches the apple of My eye," says God. Beware, sinner—you will not touch the Lord's eye long, without feeling His heavy hand! If any man injures your children, the blood is in your cheek at once, if you are a father, and you feel that you will show yourself strong in their defense—even so the heavenly Father will avenge His own elect. Therefore, take heed lest you persevere in *this* heaven-provoking sin.

And *slander*, too, lying against God's servants, inventing and spreading, wicked tales against those who walk in God's fear, this is another evil which awakens the anger of God, and



stirs up righteous fury against the man who is guilty of it. Beware! Beware!

*Filthiness*, filthiness of body and of life, will also provoke the Most Holy One. This once brought hell out of heaven upon Sodom; God sent down fire and brimstone because of the lusts of the flesh that made Sodom to stink in His nostrils; the harlot and the adulterer, and the fornicator, shall know that they sin not without provoking God very terribly.

And let me add here, among these God-provoking sins, there is that *quenching of conscience*, of which some of you have been guilty. Ah, my dear hearers, there are not many of you to whom I spoke under these first heads, for I know that very few of you would indulge in these grosser sins; but there are some of you quite as bad in another sense, for you know the right and choose the wrong; you hear of Christ and do not give your hearts to Him. We had hoped of some of you that long before this we would have seen you walking in the Lord's fear, but you are still strangers to Christ. It must have taken hard work to do this. You must have had a terrible tug with conscience, some of you; I know you have been stifling many a holy desire, and when the Spirit of God has been striving with you, you have been so desperately set on mischief, that still, you have gone on in the error of your ways. Now these sins provoke God. I do not believe that I stand in this pulpit and plead with you in God's name, and then go back and tell my Master, that you have rejected His warnings, without God's being angry with your hardness of heart and stiff necks. I know, if we send an Ambassador to a foreign court to try and make peace, and he honestly and earnestly lays down proper stipulations for peace, if they are rejected, you will soon find the newspapers and public opinion ringing with indignation. "Why," they say, "will not the men have peace when the terms are so reasonable? Get out the warships, let them have war—war to the knife! If they

will not yield to what is reasonable, then let us dress ourselves in thunder, and go forth across the sea.” And what do you think? Shall God be always provoked? Shall mercy be preached to you in vain forever? Shall Christ be presented and always rejected, and will you continue to be His enemies, and shall He never proclaim war against your souls? It is a marvel! It is a wonder that these God-provoking sins have so long been borne with, and that you are not yet cut down!

**III. And now, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THIS LONG-SUFFERING?** Why is it that this tree has not been cut down? The answer is, because *there is One who pleads for sinners*. I have shown you, and some of you will think I have shown you with very great severity, too, how reasonable it is that you should be cut down. I wish you felt it, for if you felt how reasonable it was that God should send you to hell, then you would begin to tremble, and there would be some hope for you! I can assure you I have trembled for you, when I have thought how rational, how just—no, it would seem to me, how necessary, it was that some of you should be lost—it has made me tremble for you, and I would to God, you would tremble for yourselves! But what has been the secret cause that you have been kept alive? The answer is, *Jesus Christ has pleaded for you; the crucified Savior has interfered for you!* And you ask me, “Why?” I answer, because *Jesus Christ has an interest in you all*. We do not believe in general redemption, but we believe in every word of this precious Bible, and there are many passages in the Scripture, which seem to show that Christ’s death had a universal bearing upon the sons of men. We are told that He tasted death for every man. What does that mean? Does it mean that Jesus Christ died to save every man? I do not believe it does, for it seems to me that everything which Christ intended to accomplish by the act of His death, He must accomplish, or else He will be defeated, which is not supposable. Those whom

Christ died to save I believe He will save effectually, through His substitutionary Sacrifice. But did He, in any other sense, die for the rest of mankind? He did. Nothing can be much more plain in Scripture, it seems to me, than that all sinners are spared as the result of Jesus Christ' death, and this is the sense in which men are said to trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. We read of some who denied the Lord who bought them. No one, who is bought with blood for eternal salvation, ever tramples on that blood; but Jesus Christ has shed His blood for the reprieve of men that they may be spared, and those who turn God's sparing mercy into an occasion for fresh sin, do trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. You can hold that doctrine without holding universal redemption, or without at all contradicting that undoubted truth of God, that Jesus laid down His life for His sheep, and that where He suffered, He suffered not in vain.

Now sinner whether you know it or not you are indebted to Him who did hang upon the tree, for the breath that is now in you; you had not been on praying ground and pleading terms with God this morning if it had not been for that dear suffering One. Our text represents the gardener as only *asking* to have it spared; but Jesus Christ did something more than ask—He pleaded, not only with His mouth, but with pierced hands, and pierced feet, and pierced side; and those prevailing pleas have moved the heart of God, and you are yet spared. May I speak to you, then? If your life had been spared, when you were condemned to die, by my intervention—suppose such a case—would you despise *me*? If I had power at the court, and when you were condemned to die, I had gone in and pleaded for you, and you had been reprieved—year after year would you *hate* me? Would you speak against me? Would you rail at my character? Would you find fault with my friends? I know you better—you would *love* me; you would be grateful for the sparing of your

life. O sinner, I wish you would treat the Lord Jesus as you would treat man! I wish you would think of the Lord Jesus Christ as you would think of your fellow man who had delivered you from death! You are not in hell where you would have been, if He had not come in and pleaded for you. I do beseech you, think of the misery of lost souls, and recollect that *you* would have been in such a woeful case yourself this morning, if He had not lifted up that hand once pierced for human sin. There, there, where the flames can know no abatement, where a drop of water is a gift too great to be received—there, where hope is excluded, and despair sits upon a throne of iron, binding captive souls in everlasting bands—where “Forever!” is written on the fire, and “Forever!” is printed on the chain, and “Forever! Forever! Forever!” rings out as the awful death-knell of everything like hope and rest—there you would have been this morning—this morning—if sparing Grace had not prevented!

Where are your companions, your old companions? You sat in the tavern with them. They are in hell, but you are not. When you were younger, you sinned with them, and they are lost, but you are not. Why this difference? Why are they cast away, and you spared? I can only ascribe it to the gracious longsuffering of Jehovah. O, I pray you, look at Him who spared you, and weep and mourn for your sins! May the Spirit of God come down on you this morning and draw you to the foot of His dear cross! And as you see the blood which has spared your blood, and the death which has made you live until now, I do trust that the divine Spirit may make you fall down and say, “O Jesus, how can I offend You? How can I stand out against You? Accept me and save me for Your mercy’s sake.”

While I have thus spoken of the *general* interest which Christ has in you all, I have good hope that Christ has a *special* interest in some of you! I hope that He has specially redeemed you

from among men, and bought you not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, having loved you with an everlasting love. I trust He intends with the bands of His kindness to draw you this morning. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot think that such can be the case!” But suppose you were to find out before long that you were chosen of God, and dear to Christ, and were to be a jewel in His crown forever—what would you say then, of yourself? “I would mourn that I could ever have hated Him who loved me so well! Oh, that I could ever have stood out against Him who was determined to save me! What a fool I was to quarrel with Him who had paid my price, and chosen me by His grace, and taken me to be married unto Himself forever!” I tell you that God will forgive you, but you will never forgive yourselves for having stood out and resisted so long. Oh, may eternal mercy, which has not yet said, “Cut it down,” now dig about you, and feed you that you may bring forth fruit—and then it shall be all to the praise of Him, whose precious blood has saved us from eternal wrath!

May God bless these feeble words of mine; He knows how I meant them; how I meant to speak them, how I meant to have wept over you, how I wanted that my soul should heave with passionate desire for your conversion; but if there have been no such outward manifestations, yet I pray God that the truth itself may be irresistible, and may He get to Himself the victory, and His shall be the praise, forevermore. Amen.

## 651 A SERMON FROM A RUSH – JOB 8:11-13

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 24th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Can the rush grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds grow without water? While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant. So are the paths of all who forget God. And the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.”— Job 8:11-13

ISAAC WALKED in the fields at eventide to meditate. I commend him for his *occupation*. Meditation is exceedingly profitable to the mind. If we talked less, read less, and meditated more, we would be wiser men. I commend him for *the season* which he chose for that occupation—at eventide, when the business of the day was over, and the general stillness of nature was in harmony with the quiet of his soul. I also commend him for the *place* which he selected—the wide expanse of nature—the field. Wise men can readily find a thousand subjects for contemplation abroad in the open country. Our four-square room is not very suggestive; but when a man walks in the fields, having the Lord in his heart, and his whole mental faculties directed towards heavenly things, all things aid him in his pleasing occupation. If we look above to the sun, moon, and stars, all these remind us of the grandeur of God, and make us ask ourselves, “What is man, that the Lord should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that Jehovah should visit him?” If we look below, the green

meadows, or golden cornfields all proclaim divine care and bounty. There is not a bird that sings, nor a grasshopper that chirps in the grass, which does not urge us to praise and magnify the name of the Most High—while the plants, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar which spreads its branches so gloriously in Lebanon, exhibit to observant eyes the wisdom of the great Creator of all things. The murmuring brook talks to the listening ear in hallowed whispers of Him whose cloudy throne supplies its stream; and the air, as it sighs amid the trees, tells in mysterious accents of the great unseen, but ever-active Spirit of the living God.

The great book of nature only needs to be turned over by a reverent hand, and to be read by an attentive eye, to be found to be only second in teaching to the Book of Revelation. He who would have us forget to study the fair creation of God is foolish; he would have us neglect one Book by a great Author, in order that we may the better comprehend another from the same hand. The pages of inspiration reveal God far more clearly than the fields of creation; but having once obtained the light of God the Holy Spirit, we can then enter the world of nature which has become consecrated to our best devotions, and find that “in His temple does everyone speak of His glory.”

Let us go down by the river's bank, like Pharaoh's daughter, and perhaps among the rushes we shall find a subject for thought of which we may say, as she did of Moses, “I drew it out of the water.” The reed, as it waves in yonder marsh, has a word of warning, and whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

I claim your attention for a preacher who is not often heard—lend him your ears, and when any shall ask you, “What did you go out to see?” you need not blush to answer, “A reed shaken by the wind.” The rush shall, this morning, by God's grace, teach us a lesson of self-examination. Bildad, the Shuhite, points it out to us as the picture of a hypocrite—so, going to

our work at once, we shall have three things to talk about this morning. The hypocrite's religion—first, *what is it like?* Secondly, *what it lives on;* and thirdly, *what will become of it?*

I. First, then, **THE HYPOCRITE'S PROFESSION—WHAT IS IT LIKE?** It is here compared to a rush growing in the marsh, and a reed flourishing in the water. This comparison has several points in it.

1. In the first place, hypocritical religion may be compared to the rush, for *the rapidity with which it grows*. True conversions are often very sudden—as, for example, the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer when suddenly startled out of his sleep, and made to cry, “What must I do to be saved?” But the after-growth of Christians is not quite as rapid and uninterrupted—seasons of deep depression chill their joy; hours of furious temptation make a dreadful onslaught upon their quiet; they cannot always rejoice; their life is checkered; they are emptied from vessel to vessel, and are acquainted with grief. True Christians are very much like oaks which take years to reach their maturity—many March winds blow through them before they are well-rooted; and oftentimes tempest, and flood, and drought, and hurricane exercise their tremendous powers upon them. Not so the hypocrite—once having made a profession of being converted, things generally go very smoothly with him. “Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” They are strangers to lamentations over inbred corruption. When believers talk of a warfare within, they are astonished. If we groan out, “O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” these people say, “What bad people these Christians must be, to talk in that way! What black hearts they must have, and how inconsistent for them to claim to be children of God!”



The hypocrite can always pray well and sing well; he meets no hindrances in coming to the Mercy Seat, has no groans to mingle with his formal songs. The backs of living men ache under their loads, but a steam-engine having no living sensibilities knows no pains; a horse may stumble from weariness, but a locomotive, never! Even so, the mechanical professor goes on and on and on at an even rate, when *living* souls enjoy no such perfect calmness. Strong temptations do not grieve the mere *professor*; the devil does not care to molest him; he knows he is sure of him, and so he lets him very much alone. The Pharisee's house stood very firmly though it was built on sand; and it neither shook nor stirred till the flood came; it was as firm to all human appearance as if it had been founded on the Rock of Ages. When the trial-hour came, *then* the destruction was terribly complete; but meanwhile, its foundations were dug without labor, and its timbers were set up without trouble. It is an ill sign, dear friend, if you never have to search your heart with deep anxiety lest you should be deceived. To have such strong faith that you never waver is one thing; but to be filled with such strong presumption that you never *examine yourself* is quite another. "Tush!" says this man, "I can do all things; I can run and not be weary; I can walk and not faint; I do not understand these sighings of Little-Faith, and limping of Ready-to-Halt; I cannot understand all this noise about conflict within—I am always peaceable and quiet." Yes, so it may be. Alas, many have heard the voice, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." So, like the rush by the river, the hypocrite grows up suddenly and flourishingly in divine things, *to all appearance*, and finds it easy work to be green and fair in the ways of the Lord.

2. The rush is of all plants one of the most *hollow and unsubstantial*. It looks stout enough to be wielded as a staff, but he that leans upon it shall most certainly fall. It is a water-loving

thing, and it partakes of the nature of that on which it feeds—it is unstable as water, and it does not excel; it has a fine appearance, but it is of no service whatever where stability is needed. So is it with the hypocrite; he is fair enough on the outside, but there is no solid faith in Christ Jesus in him; no real repentance on account of sin; no vital union to Christ Jesus. He can pray, but not in secret, and the essence and soul of prayer he never knew. He has never wrestled with the angel, never sighed and cried unto God, and been “heard in that he feared.” He has a pretended confidence, but that confidence never was founded and bottomed on the finished work of Jesus Christ. He was never emptied of self, never brought down to feel that all his own doing, and willing, and power are less than nothing and vanity. If there had been a deep repentance, and a real confidence, and a true life in Jesus, then he had not been the hypocrite that he now is. Oh, dear friends, while I speak upon these things, I have over my spirit the overshadowing of a great gloom. What if some of us should be found to have been as unsubstantial as the rush by the river when God comes to judge the world? What? When you need a hope to bear you up in the hour of death—what if it should snap beneath you? You high professors, you ancient members and revered church officers, you eloquent preachers of the Word—what if all your profession should, like the baseless fabric of a vision, pass away? You have been drinking of the cup of the Lord; you have been feasting at His sacramental table; you have talked a great deal of rich experiences; you have boasted of the divine graces, which you think the Spirit of God has given you—but what if it should all be a delusion? What if you should have fostered in your soul self-deception, and should now be traversing the way of darkness while you dream that you are in the way of light? May the Lord search us, and give us that true, solid, substantial, real, strong-hearted faith in Christ which will stand the test!

The reed is hollow and has no heart, and the hypocrite has none either; and lack of heart is fatal indeed. When the Roman seer killed the victim to take an omen from the innards, he always considered it to be the worst sign of all if no heart was found, or if the heart was shriveled. “Their heart is divided,” said Hosea, “now shall they be found wanting.” God abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found. Sirs, if you cannot give God your hearts, do not mock Him with solemn sounds upon thoughtless tongues! If you do not mean your godliness, do not profess it! Above all things, abhor mere profession. Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the great revival in America there were conversions of all sorts of people— from harlots upwards, but not one single conversion, he said, *of ungodly professors*. Those seemed to have been the only persons upon whom the Spirit of God did not descend. Beware, then, of having the outward form of religion, and being hollow and heartless like the rush, for then your case is desperate indeed.

3. A third comparison very naturally suggests itself, namely, that the hypocrite is very like the rush for *its bending properties*. When the rough wind comes howling over the marsh, the rush has made up its mind that it will hold its place at all hazards, so if the wind blows from the north, he bends to the south, and the blast sweeps over him. And if the wind blows from the south, he bends to the north, and the gale has no effect upon him. Only grant the rush one thing, that he may keep his place, and he will cheerfully bow to all the rest. The hypocrite will yield to good influences if he is in good society. “Oh yes, certainly, certainly, sing, pray, anything you like.” With equal readiness, he will yield to evil influences, if he happens to be in connection with them. “Oh, yes, sing a song, talk wantonness, run into gay society, attend the theater, take a turn with the dice! Certainly, if you wish it! ‘When we are at Rome, we do as Rome does.’” Anything to oblige anybody is his motto. He is an

omnivorous feeder, and like the swine, can eat the vegetable of propriety, or the flesh of iniquity. One form of doctrine is preached to him—very well, he would not wish to contend against it for a moment! It is contradicted by the next preacher he hears—and really, there is a great deal to be said on the other side—so he holds with hare and hounds, too. He is all for heat when the weather is hot, and quite as much for cold when it is the season. He can freeze, and melt, and boil, all in an hour—just as he finds it pays best to be solid or liquid. If it is most respectable to call a thing black, well, then, it is black! If it will pay better to call it white, well, then, it is not so very black—in fact, it is rather white, or white altogether, if you like to call it so!

The gross example of the Vicar of Bray comes at once to one's mind. He had been a papist under Henry VIII, then a Protestant under a Protestant reign, then a papist under Mary, then again a Protestant under Elizabeth; and he declared he had always been consistent with his principle, for his principle was to continue the Vicar of Bray! There are some who are evidently consistent in this particular, and in the idea that they will make things as easy for themselves as they can, and will get as much profit as they can, either by truth or lies. Do you not know some? They have not an atom of that stern stuff of which martyrs are made in the whole of their composition. They love that modern goddess, charity. When Diana went down, charity went up, and she is as detestable a goddess as ever Diana was. Give me a man who will be all things to all men to win souls, if it is not a matter of principle; but give me the man who, when it comes to be a matter of right and wrong, would rather die than deny his faith; who could burn, but could not for a moment conceal his sentiments, much less lay them aside until a more convenient season. True godliness, such as will save the soul, must not be the mere bark, but the heart, the sap, the

*essence* of a man's being—it must run right through and through, so that he cannot live without it. That religion which you do not carry with you every day, and which is not the dearest objective for which you live, is not worth picking up from a dunghill! Beloved, we must be ready to *die* for Christ, or we shall have no joy in the fact that Christ died for us.

4. Yet again, the bulrush has been used in Scripture as a picture of a hypocrite from its habit of *hanging down its head*. “Is it to hang your head like a bulrush?” asks the prophet, speaking to some who kept a hypocritical fast. Pretended Christians seem to think that to hang down the head is the very index of deep piety. To look piously miserable—to speak in a wretched tone of voice—to be constantly lamenting the wickedness of the times, and bewailing the badness of the harvests, and the wickedness of our legislature—to see nothing anywhere but what is vile, deceptive, and abominable, is thought to be the trademark of superfine godliness. It is the mark of a hypocrite to wear always a sad countenance—Job says of the hypocrite, “Will he delight himself in the Almighty?” And the answer that he expected was, “No, it is altogether impossible!” A real hypocrite finds no satisfaction in his religion; he goes through with it because he thinks he must; he walks to his place of worship with his books under his arm just as a culprit might be supposed to walk up the gallows stairs, and when he gets to a place of worship, he is very proper in all his demeanor—very proper, indeed, but he is never joyous. Smile on Sundays? Shocking! What? Enjoy anything like mirth at any time! Awful! Now, you understand all about this. There are some things which you must handle very tenderly because they will break if you don't. A man, dressed in shoddy garments, walks very demurely for fear the rubbish should tear, but good broadcloth allows us liberty of action without fear of such an accident. Gingerbread religionists may only be looked at in their somber

aspects, but genuine believers are not ashamed to be viewed even when their cheerfulness is at its fullest.

A person who has bought a pair of shoes made of brown paper must mincingly tread with delicate steps; but he, who according to Scripture, is shod with iron and brass may, with manly gait, march on and even leap for joy without fear. I love Christian preciseness of action, but I abhor hypocritical decorum and formalistic exactness of worship. I would advocate holy cheerfulness, a Christian freedom which lets the whole man show itself, a freedom of sorrowing when it is the time for sorrow, and a freedom of rejoicing when it is the time for rejoicing. That constrained, stiffly starched religion, which some people think such a great deal of, is nothing but the bulrush religion of the hypocrite and the Pharisee, and the sooner we throw it out the better. The man whose heart is right with God does not stop to say, “How will this look?” His heart tells him, as he reads the Word, that such a course is right, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he follows it. Right with him is delight. He knows that evil is not denied to him as though he were debarred from pleasure, but that it is only kept from him as a tender parent would keep poison from a child. Our life is the life of liberty; and we find, of true religion, that “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

5. Once more—the rush is well taken as an emblem of the mere professor from *its bearing no fruit*. Nobody would expect to find figs on a bulrush, or grapes of Eshcol on a reed. So it is with the hypocrite—he brings forth no fruit. The hypocrite gets as far as this—“I do *not* drink, I do *not* swear, I do *not* cheat, I do *not* lie, I do *not* break the Sabbath.” His religion is all negative; but when it comes to anything positive, he fails. What have you ever done for Christ? You may look at the whole of the hypocrite’s life, and it yields nothing. Perhaps he has given a guinea or two to a charity. Yes—but did he give it to *God*? He

has been kind to the poor. Did he look at the poor as being *God's* poor, and care for them because *God* cares for them? Did he do it for God? Throughout the whole life of the hypocrite, there is nothing in which he really serves God. What? Not when he has made that long prayer? He did it either to satisfy his conscience, or to please those who were listening to him. Did he really pray to God and do it for God's glory, and in order that he might have fellowship with God? If so, he is no hypocrite; but the hypocrite proper, though he has left off many wrong things, yet he has not advanced so far as to bring forth fruit meet for repentance; he has not run in the way of holiness; he has not sought after the image of Christ; he does not delight in communion with Christ; he has no faith, no joy, no hope, no conformity to the Spirit of the Master; he lacks fruit, and therefore, he is as the rush, and not as a plant of the Lord's right-hand planting.

I will not stay further to work out this parallel; only if any words have seemed to strike you, let them strike you. If there has been a sentence in what I have said that suited my own case, I do desire to feel its power. The worst is that some of you, who are most sincere, will be troubled when you search yourselves, when we do not want you to be; and others who are really hypocrites are the very last persons to think they are. When our young members come to me in such trouble, crying, "Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite," I always think, "I believe you are not, or else you would not be afraid of it." But those who are never afraid, who have just written it down as a matter of fact that all is well with them, should listen to the word of the prophet, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not: yes, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not." The worm may be in the center of the apple, when the cheek of the fruit is still beautiful to look upon. God

save us from hypocrisy, and grant us grace to see ourselves in a true light.

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider **WHAT IT IS THAT THE HYPOCRITE’S RELIGION LIVES ON.** “Can the rush grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds grow without water?” The rush is entirely dependent upon the ooze in which it is planted. If there should come a season of drought, and the water should fail from the marsh, the rush would more speedily die than any other plant. “While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant.” The Hebrew name for the rush signifies a plant that is always drinking; and so the rush lives perpetually by sucking and drinking in moisture. This is the case of the hypocrite. The hypocrite cannot live without something that shall foster his apparent piety. Let me show you some of this marsh and water upon which the hypocrite lives.

Some people’s religion cannot live without *excitement*—revival services, earnest preachers, and zealous prayer meetings keep them green; but the earnest minister dies, or goes to another part of the country; the church is not quite so earnest as it was, and what then? Where are your converts? Oh, how many there are who are hot-house plants; while the temperature is kept up to a certain point, they flourish and bring forth flowers, if not fruits; but take them out into the open air, give them one or two nights’ frost of persecution, and where are they? My dear hearers, beware of that godliness which depends upon excitement for its life! I do not speak against religious excitement—men get excited over politics, and science, and trade—why should they not be excited about the far weightier things of religion? But still, though you may indulge yourself with it, sometimes, do not let it be your element. I am afraid that many churches have been revived and revived, till they have become like big bubbles full of wind, and now they have almost vanished into thin air. The grace which



man gives, man can take away. If your piety has sprung up like a mushroom, it will be about as frail. Doubtless, many are converted at revivals who run well and hold out; and then their conversion is the work of the Spirit of God; but there are as many, I fear, of another kind, who get delirious with excitement; who fancy that they have repented, dream that they have believed, and then imagine themselves to be the children of God, and go on in such a delusion perhaps year after year. Beware! Beware! Some hypocrites can no more live without excitement than the rush can live without water; but dear hearers, pray that you may be like the palm tree, which even in the desert, still continues green, and brings forth its fruit in the year of drought.

Many mere professors live upon *encouragement*. You are the child of godly parents—those parents naturally look with great delight upon the first signs of divine grace in you, and they encourage and foster, as they should do, everything that is good. Or you belong to a class such as some of those most blessed classes which meet here, presided over by tender, loving spirits, and whenever you have a little difficulty, you can run to these kind helpers; whenever any fresh temptation arises, you find strength in their warning and counsel. This is a very great privilege. I wish that in all churches we would practice the text, “Encourage him,” more and more. We ought to comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. But, dear friends, beware of the piety which depends upon encouragement. You will have to go, perhaps, where you will be frowned at and scowled at, where the head of the household, instead of encouraging prayer, will refuse you either the room or the time for engaging in it. You may meet with hard words, bitter sneers, and cruel mockery because you profess to be a Christian. Oh, get grace which will stand that fiery trial. God give you a grace that will

be independent of human helpers, because it hangs upon the bare arm of God Himself.

Some, too, we know, whose religion is sustained by *example*. It may be the custom in the circle in which you move to attend a place of worship; no, more, it has come to be the fashion to join the church and make a profession of religion. Well, example is a good thing. When I was crossing the Humber from Hull to New Holland the other day, a steamer came in with sheep on board, and there was some difficulty in getting them from the boat to the pier. The butcher first dragged one sheep over the drawbridge, and then the others came along readily enough. Example is a good thing—one true sheep of Christ may lead the rest in the way of truth and obedience; but a religion which depends entirely on other people must obviously go to ruin when subjected to the temptation of an evil example. Why, if you simply join the church because other young people do it, or profess such-and-such a faith because it happens to be the prevailing doctrine in the district where you reside—why, then, your religion will depend on the locality, and when you move somewhere else, your religion will move off, too, or you from it. Young man, avoid this feeble sort of piety. Be a man who can be singular when to be singular is to be right. If the whole world shall run headlong down the broad road, be it yours to thread your way through the crowd against the current along the uphill way of life. The dead fish floats down the stream, the live fish goes against it. Show your life by shunning unholy example.

Furthermore, a hypocrite's religion is often very much supported by the *profit* that he makes by it. Mr. By-Ends joined the church because, he said, he would get a good wife by making a profession of religion. Besides, Mr. By-Ends kept a shop, and went to a place of worship, because he said the people would have to buy goods somewhere, and if they saw

him at their place very likely they would come to his shop, and so his religion would help his trade. Thus he argued that there were three good things—a profession of religion, a good wife, and a good trade as well. Suppose, Mr. By-Ends, that your religion involved your missing the supposed good wife, and losing the good customers, what about it then? “Why, then,” says he, “I’m very sorry, but really we must look to the main chance. We must not commit ourselves too far.” That is Mr. By-Ends’ way of judging. He does not look upon the things of God as the main chance, they are means to an end—that is all. I fear there is much of this everywhere. You will know best, any of you, how far you are affected by it. I am sure there are few, if any of you, who can be suspected of coming here to gain trade, for the thing does not answer in such a city as London; but in country towns, this operates marvelously. You can have the Dissenting trade if you go to meeting, or you can have the church trade if you go to the steeple-house. Well, worshippers of the golden calf, do you know what Christ will do with you if you are found in His temple when He comes? That scourge of small cords will be on your backs! “Take these things from here,” He will say, as He sees your tables, and your doves, and your shekels. “My Father’s house shall be called a house of prayer—you have made it a den of thieves.” The rush will grow where there is plenty of marsh, plenty of profit for religion, but dry up the gains, and where would some people’s religion be? Pray with all your might against this loathsome disgusting sin of making a pretension to godliness merely for the sake of getting something by it. Yet, doubtless, there are crowds who do this.

With certain persons their godliness rests very much upon their *prosperity*. “Does Job serve God for nothing?” was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man. And of many, it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a

fashion because He prospers them; but if things went ill with them, they would give up all faith in God. I remember two who joined this church. I remember them with sorrow; I faintly hope good things of them, but I frequently fear the worst. They joined this church when things were going very well, but almost from that very time, they had a succession of losses, and they imputed this to their having made a profession of religion, and so they gave up outward religious duties. Whether they did that out of a scrupulous honesty, I scarcely can tell, or whether it really was this—that they could not receive evil at the hand of God as well as good—I do not know. I am inclined to fear it was the latter. There are some who quarrel with the most High. If they can clearly see that, since the time of their supposed conversion, the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way, but if it has been nothing but adversity, then they are astonished, and think God is not kind with them. Do you know that the promise of the old covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity? Listen to this text—“Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit”—what? “He *purges* it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” If you bring forth fruit, you will have to endure affliction. “Alas,” says one, “that is a terrible prospect!” Ah, but, beloved, this affliction works out such comfortable fruit that the Christian, who is the subject of it, has learned to rejoice in tribulations—because as his tribulations abound, so his consolation abounds by Christ Jesus!

Rest assured, if you are a godly man or woman, you will be no stranger to the rod. Trials must and will befall. But do not let me mislead anybody into the idea of praying for trouble! I have heard of one who did so—he only did it but once—many trials made him wiser! The true-born child knows how to bear the rod, but he will not ask for it—if he asked for it, he would

be very silly—and it would be of no service to him. You will have it sooner or later, and though, it may be, months and years will roll very quietly with you, yet there will be days of darkness, and you ought to rejoice that there are such, for in these you will be weaned from earth and made ready for heaven; you will be delivered from your clinging to the present, and made to long, and pine, and sigh for the things which are not seen but eternal, so soon to be revealed to you.

To conclude this point. The hypocrite is very much affected by the *respectability* of the religion which he avows. John Bunyan's pithy way of putting it is, "Many walk with religion when she wears her silver slippers," but they forsake her if she goes barefoot. May I ask you this question? What would you do if to follow Christ were penal according to the laws of the land? If you had to live under perpetual jeopardy of life for reading the Word, would you hide it as the saints of God did, behind the wainscot or under the floor, and read it down in the cellar or up in the attic at spare moments? Could you come forward in the day of trial, as those did in Pliny's time, and say, "I am a Christian"? Do you think that like poor Tomkins, when Bonner held his finger over the candle to let him see what it was like, you could still say you could burn, but you could not turn? Could you stand as some of the martyrs did at the stake, telling those who looked on that if they did not clap their hands at the last they might know their religion was not true, and so at the very last, when their poor fingers were all on fire, they would still lift them up, and wave their hands to and fro, and cry out, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" Do you think you would have the grace to suffer for Christ Jesus? You may say, "I fear I would not." My dear friends, that fear is a very natural one, but mark you, if you can bear the ordinary trials of the day, the constant trials of the world, and take them before God, and exhibit Christian patience under them, you may *hope* that as a

believer in Christ you would have more grace given you when the trials became more severe, and so you would be able to pass through them as the saints of old did! But mark you; if the present trials and troubles of the day are too much for you, and you cannot exhibit Christian patience under them, I am compelled to ask you in the language of Jeremiah, “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, how will you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” This may help us to try ourselves.

**III. We have a third point to close with, and that is, WHAT BECOMES OF THE HYPOCRITE’S HOPE?**

“While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant. So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down, it often happens that *he dries up for lack of the marsh on which he lives*. The excitement, the encouragement, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity, upon which he lived fail him, and he fails, too. Alas, how dolefully this is the case in all Christian Churches! Little have we had to mourn over defections during the years of our ministry, but we have had some sorrowful, very sorrowful cases, and I doubt not we shall have more. “Lord, is it I?” “Lord, is it I?” is a question that may be passed round among professing Christians. I fear that there are those here this morning who one day will deny the Lord who bought them, and crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. “Oh,” says one, “it cannot be me.” Do not be too sure, friend, do not be too sure! If I could come in prophetic spirit to some of you who *will* do this, and look you in the face, and tell you what you will do, you would say like Hazeal, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?” And I should have to settle my countenance until I became ashamed, and look at you yet again,

and say, “You are no dog, and yet you will play the dog, and return to your vomit, and become yet again what once you were, only with this aggravation, that you will have sinned against light and against knowledge, against sacred influences, and professed enjoyments of divine love.” You have cleansed the house, you have swept it, you have garnished it, and the evil spirit is gone; but if the Holy Spirit has not driven him out, if this has not been a work of power on the part of God, that evil spirit will come back, and he will take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they shall enter in and dwell there, and your last end will be worse than the first. Better not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to be turned back again.

The worst of men are those traitors who leave the army of truth to side with the foe. I believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of every true child of God—but there are, in all our churches, certain spurious pretenders who will not hold on their way, who will blaze and sparkle for a season, and then they will go out in darkness. They are “wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Better far make no pretension of having come to Christ, and of having been born-again, unless through divine grace you shall hold fast to the end! Remember the back door to hell! Remember the back door to hell! There is a public entrance for the open sinner; but there is a back door for the professed saint. There is a back door for the hoary-headed professor who has lived many years in apparent sincerity, but who has been a liar before God. There is a back door for the preacher who can talk fast and loudly, but who does not, in his own heart, know the truth of God he is preaching. There is a back door to hell for church members who are amiable and excellent in many respects, but who have not really looked unto the Lord Jesus Christ and found true

salvation in Him. God grant that this may wake some who otherwise would sleep themselves into the pit of hell.

Yet again, where the rush still continues green, because it has marsh and water enough on which to feed, another result happens, namely, that *before long the sickle is used to cut it down*. So must it be with you, professor, if you shall keep up a green profession all your days. Yet if you are heartless, spongy, soft, yielding, unfruitful, like the rush, you will be cut down and sorrowful will be the day when, with a blaze, you shall be consumed. Oh, to be cut down at the last! Death, I hope, beloved, will be to many of you the season of your greatest joy; you will climb to Pisgah's top with weary footsteps, but when once there, the vision of the landscape will make amends for all the toil. The brooks, and hills, and valleys will flow with milk and honey; and your delighted eyes shall gaze upon your portion, your eternal heritage. But oh, how different will be our lot, if instead of this, "Tekel" shall be written upon us at the last because we are found wanting! "O my God! My God! Have You forsaken me? Am I, after all, mistaken? Have I played the hypocrite, and must I take the mask off now? Have I covered over the cancer? Have I worn a golden cloth over my leprous forehead, and must it be torn away? And must I stand the mockery of devils, and the laughter of all worlds? What? Have I drunk of Your cup? Have I eaten with You in the streets, and must I hear You say, 'I never knew you, depart from Me you worker of iniquity'? Oh, must it be?" Then how hard will be the bed on which I die! How stuffed with thorns that pillow! How tortured and anguished my poor broken heart, when every prop is knocked away, and the house comes tumbling down about my ears, when every drop of comfort is dried up, and even here the thirsty spirit lacks a drop of cordial to afford it comfort!



O my dear hearers, by the eternal God I do beseech you, seek a genuine religion. Do not put off self-examination. I dare not put it off on my own account, and I pray you do not postpone it on yours. If I have not said a word to comfort and to cheer you this morning, forgive that lack of service, for my aim is to drive at this one thing—it will in the end be the best and most comforting to you all, if you will set to work now, and with diligence to try yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Cry to God to aid you in this; you cannot do it well yourself, for, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” O cry to Him—“Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my ways.” Time is flying—set about the business before it is gone! Death is coming on—search yourselves before the darkness thickens into midnight gloom. The judgment day will soon arrive; the King will sit upon the Great White Throne. Oh, before *He* judges you, judge yourselves, that you be not judged! The division will soon take place between the goats and the sheep. O, seek to be under Christ the heavenly Shepherd now, that you are not banished from His presence at the last. What more can I say? It is not your body that is at stake—it is not your estates that are in jeopardy—your soul, your undying SOUL, destined to heaven’s glories or to hell’s miseries is now in question. Search yourselves, search yourselves, and God Almighty search you, too!

Ah, there are some of you who have no need to search. Without any trial you know yourselves to be on the wrong side, and there are others of you who, when you have searched, will still be afraid that you are wrong. Ah, well, whatever we are, or may have been, remember Jesus came into the world to seek and to save those who are lost. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Looking to that thorn-

crowned head, those dear hands and feet nailed to the tree, that blessed heart all exposed by the soldier's spear—looking there, looking *only* there, looking there NOW—we find salvation! Believers, you have looked before; but if that is a matter of question, look now. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Repeat that glance which gave you comfort. There is life still in a look at that crucified One; there is life at this moment for you. Jesus! Your people look to You again! Lover of our souls, accept us! Oh, you who never looked before, He reigns in glory, mighty to save! He gives repentance and remission of sins! Only trust Him with your soul. Have done with all your works, your willings, your prayers, your tears, your *everything* as a ground of confidence, and trust in HIM who died for sinners, and you “shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands.” The Lord grant we may be found right at last; for Jesus' sake! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Psalm 139.***

## 652 JESUS, THE SHEPHERD – ISA. 40:11

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### A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 1st, 1865,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” — Isaiah 40:11

OUR LORD JESUS is very frequently described as the Shepherd of His people. The figure is inexhaustible, but it has been so often handled that I suppose it would be difficult to say anything fresh upon it. We all know, and are very glad and comforted in the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Shepherd, exercises towards us, all the kind and necessary offices which a shepherd performs towards his sheep. With gentle sway He *rules* us for our good—“Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.” He *guides* us—“And when He puts forth His own sheep He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” He *provides* for us—“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” He *protects* us from all forms of evil; therefore, “though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He is with us: His rod and His staff, they comfort us.” If we wander, He *seeks* us out and brings us back. “He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” If we are broken, He binds us up; if we are wounded, He heals

according to His own Word, “I will bind up those who are broken, and will strengthen those who are sick.” The sheep is an animal of many diseases and many needs, and so the Christian is an individual of many sins and many infirmities; but as the shepherd endeavors to meet all the needs of his flock, so our Lord Jesus succors all the blood-bought company in all their needs.

We propose to illustrate the great doctrine of the text in a Scriptural, and therefore we hope, in an interesting, manner. First, we shall consider in connection with the text, *Old Testament illustrations*; in the second place, *New Testament descriptions*; and, in the third place, *impressive applications*. **I.** We commence with **OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS** of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ discharges the office of feeding His flock like a shepherd.

Out of five great types we begin with *Abel, the shepherd slain*. The second man who was born into the world was a shepherd, and was, in many respects, typical of our Good Shepherd. “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” Abel was a type of the Savior in that, being a shepherd, *he sanctified his work to the glory of God, and he offered sacrifice of blood upon the altar of the Lord*. The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type of our Lord is not very full and comprehensive, but it is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. Abel is nothing like so complete and perfect a portrait of our own Lord Jesus, as other shepherds of whom we have to speak; but as we see him standing as shepherd, and yet, a sacrificing priest, offering upon the altar a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God, we discern there at once the picture of our Lord, who brings before His Father a Sacrifice of precious blood, to which Jehovah ever has respect. Abel, the sacrificing

shepherd, was hated by his brother—hated without a cause; and even so was the Savior—the spirit of this world, the natural and carnal man, hated the better Man, the accepted Man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and the man of the world rested not until His blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his own altar and his sacrifice with his own blood; and he must be blind indeed, who cannot behold the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a Priest before the Lord.

Abel is the type of Jesus the slain shepherd; let us attentively consider him. We have been reading in the 10th chapter of John, this morning, that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep—let us weep over Him as we view Him stretched upon the ground by the hatred of mankind, at the foot of His own altar of Sacrifice, pouring out His blood. We read of *Abel's blood*, in the New Testament, that it *speaks*, “He being dead yet speaks.” “The Lord said unto Cain, The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground.” Herein we have a blessed type of the Lord—His blood had a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy—

“The rich blood of Jesus slain  
Speaks peace as loud from every vein.”

It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at Jesus Christ's altar, and to see Him, Himself, offered there as a whole burnt-offering acceptable unto God; to see Him lying bleeding there as the slaughtered Priest, and then to hear the voice of His blood speaking peace in our consciences, peace in the Church of God, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker—speaking peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed man. Abel is first in order of

time, and Jesus first in order of excellence. The earth opened her mouth to receive Abel's blood, and Jesus' Sacrifice has blessed this poor, sin-ruined world. Abel received divine witness to his righteousness, and Jesus obtained the same in the day of His resurrection; but fullness of other matters forbids us to linger.

Further down the page of sacred history we find another shepherd. He is a more instructive type of the Savior, perhaps, than the first, but in Abel we discover a truth of God, which is absent in all the others. Abel is the only one of the typical shepherds who dies at the foot of the altar, he is the only sacrificing shepherd; and here, you see Jesus Christ in the very earliest ages set forth to mankind as the slaughtered victim; that whatever else the early saints might not see, yet they might know that the seed of the woman would shed His precious blood. This most vital truth is not withheld even for a little season.

Now we turn to *Jacob, the toiling shepherd*. Here is a type of the Good Shepherd not as dying, but as keeping sheep with a view to get unto Himself a spouse and a flock. Jacob left his father's house. He departed from all the joy and comfort of the house in which he was the recognized heir, both by his own purchase and his Father's promise. Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of the love which He bore us, left His Father's house above and came down to tabernacle among men. Jacob repaired to his mother's brethren; and even so our Lord, on the mother's side, counts men His brethren. "He came unto His own." That vision which Jacob saw the first night after he had left his father's house, seems to me, to be a representation of the great objective which our Lord had set before Him, as the intent of His mission here below. Jacob slept, and dreamed that he saw a ladder, the foot of which stood upon the earth, while the top reached to heaven, from where a covenant God spoke to His

chosen servant; and so, before the Savior's eyes, as the great reward of all His life's travail, He saw a ladder set up by which earth should be connected with heaven. He saw fallen man at the foot of it, but He beheld a covenant God at the top, while the angels of God ascending and descending upon His own person, as upon the divine road of communication, by which prayer mounts and mercy descends. As soon as Jacob arrived at the house of his mother's brethren, he began to work out of the love he bore to Rachel; and Jesus Christ no sooner descended upon this lower earth, than He began at once to labor to win His spouse.

Now, there were in the house of manhood two daughters, to both of whom Jesus must be betrothed. There was first of all the Jewish Church, which was in His eyes His Rachel, His dearly beloved, and He toiled for her; but in the days of His flesh His own received Him not. Though while He was here below, He declared that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet Israel was not gathered; but Jesus did not lose His reward, for the Gentile Church, the tender-eyed Leah, was His reward. "Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth." Leah, the Gentile Church, is far more fruitful unto Christ in spiritual children, than the Rachel for whom He served in the days of His flesh; but the day comes when Rachel shall be more fully increased, when the fullness of the Gentiles having been gathered in, the Jew shall recognize Messiah, and the Jewish people shall acknowledge their King. We understand from Jacob's own description of his toil, that his labor, in order to get to himself his spouse, was of the most arduous character;

and it will be well for the intelligent Christian to see Jesus Christ in just such toil, seeking to redeem unto Himself, His own beloved, that they might forever be one with Himself in His own glory.

In the 31st chapter of Genesis, at the 38th verse, Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil—“These twenty years have I been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it; you did require it from my hand, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.” Even more toilsome than this, was the life of our Savior here below. He watched over all His sheep till He could give as His last account, “Of all those whom You have given Me I have lost none, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” His hair was wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from His eyes, for all night He was in prayer, wrestling with God. One night it is Peter who must be pleaded for; another time, another claims His tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil, as Jesus Christ might have uttered, if He had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of His service in order to gather unto Himself His people—

“Cold mountains and the midnight air,  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer;  
The desert His temptation knew,



His conflict, and His victory, too.”

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob's hand. If they were torn of beasts, he must make it good; if any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. And did not the Savior stand just so while He was here below? Was not His toil for His Church just the toil of One who felt that He was under suretyship obligations, to bring every one of them safe to the hand of Him who had committed them to His charge? Look upon toiling Jacob and you see a representation of Him of whom the text says, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.”

One other point of resemblance there is here, namely, that when Jacob had thus purchased to himself his spouse, and had received a reward for all his toil out of the flock which he himself tended, he then conducted both his family and his flock away from Laban. This is a point never to be forgotten. Shouldering His cross, Jesus went outside the camp, and in so doing, He speaks to each of us! “Let us, therefore, go forth outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” He went to His mother's brethren that He might fetch out His chosen from among men, and His voice to His spouse is, “Hearken, O daughter and consider: forget also your own people, and your father's house. So shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and you worship Him.” Jacob, coming back from Laban to the Promised Land, is a true picture of Jesus Christ coming up from the world, followed by His Church, to enter upon that better Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt forever. The toiling shepherd never ceased his work till he had bid farewell to Laban, once and for all, and had come to dwell in tents where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt before him. And Christ's work is not accomplished in us till He has made us, like Himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, and

separate from sinners. Although these types are very full, I choose rather to give them to you as suggestions, to think out for yourselves than to enlarge upon them myself.

*Joseph is a type of Jesus, reigning in the Egypt of this world for the good of his own people, while they are here below.* Remember Joseph's history. We find that he kept his father's flock with his brethren. So did our Savior when He began to teach and to preach. In the midst of the envious Scribes and Pharisees He kept His Father's flock. They could not, however, tolerate Him in whom they discerned a royalty not in themselves. As Joseph wore a coat of many colors, indicative of princely rank, and of his father's love, even so, Jesus Christ, in the perfections of His nature, being something more than ordinary man, was soon spied out by envious shepherds, as anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Then they began to find fault with Joseph's words. He had seen a dream in which the sun and moon and the eleven stars were made obedient unto him. And as the envious Scribes and Pharisees listened to the words of the Savior, and heard Him claim that He was the Son of God, and that He came down from heaven, they thought that He dreamed; they charged Him with blasphemy, and straightway their hearts were set against Him, and they were determined upon His destruction. They sold Him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. So our Joseph was sold into Egypt to the powers of evil. There He was falsely accused, though in Him was no sin.

Our Joseph, our blessed Shepherd, was cast into the prison of the grave, and there He abode for a while, but by-and-by, He came out of prison and Joseph/Jesus—it matters not which word I use—Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. That same Shepherd of ours who was sold by His envious brethren, and who went down into the prison-tomb, is now exalted high above all principalities and powers and every name

that is named; and even here, in this Egypt, where His people now dwell, Jesus Christ is King. Not a dog dares move his tongue in all the land of Egypt without the permission of Joseph, and surely no enemy can forge a weapon against Christ's Church here on earth—

“He overrules all mortal things,  
And manages our mean affairs.”

The Father has committed all power unto His Son. Jesus Christ is King over Egypt's realm. Now observe the likeness between Joseph and Jesus in this respect. Joseph was of very singular advantage to the Egyptians. They would have starved in the years of famine if his foreseeing eye had not foreseen the famine, and stored up the plenty of the seven previous years. And Jesus Christ is of great service even to this wicked world. It is by Him that it is preserved. The barren fig tree was spared because the farmer pleaded for it, and the intercession of Jesus Christ spares the lives of the unregenerate; and though they will be swept away with the broom of destruction when their iniquity is fully ripe, yet meanwhile they are spared because of the mediatorial sovereignty of the Great Shepherd. Jesus Christ, like Joseph, rules over the land of Egypt; but Joseph ruled for a special purpose. God had sent Joseph to Egypt, but not mainly for the sake of the Egyptians. “God has sent me here to save your souls alive.” This was Joseph's own testimony. Jesus Christ now has power over all flesh—why? “That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” The universal reign of Christ, in which respect His redemption comes to all the sons of men, has for its objective that *special redemption*, in which respect it comes only to His own people who are His sheep.

Perhaps some of you may wonder, how I venture to call Joseph a shepherd. You grant me that in his early days he kept his father's flock, but was he a shepherd while he was in Egypt? You will believe the dying words of his father Jacob, will you not? His father Jacob, when speaking of him said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall; the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Then, there comes a sentence between brackets—"for there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Joseph is here called the shepherd and the stone. I could not make out, in meditation, why he should be both a shepherd and a stone, but you remember that Jesus Christ was at once the Shepherd and the Stone which the builders refused, which afterwards became the headstone of the corner. And so Joseph, in being a shepherd of his people, and in having been the cornerstone of the Israelites while they were in Egypt, was both the shepherd and the stone of Israel. Beloved, it seems to me to be such a delightful thought to think that Jesus Christ is King today in the world. The Lord reigns—let the earth rejoice! Jesus Christ wears the crown of universal monarchy this day! "The Lord said unto my lord, sit You at My right hand until Your enemies are made Your footstool," so that nothing happens now, but that which Jesus permits, ordains, and overrules. Let empires go to pieces—it is Christ who breaks them with a rod of iron, and splinters them like potters' vessels—let infernos burn down cities, and let diseases devastate nations, let war succeed war, and pestilence famine, yet still, our Joseph rules all things well, and we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, who are called according to His purpose. The saints are in the world, but Christ reigns over the

world for His Church, that it may be kept and preserved in the midst of an evil generation.

You remember that remarkable saying, “Now every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians”—a strange thing, and yet in Egypt the shepherds found their shelter! Now every Christian is an abomination to the world, and yet, it is in this world that at the present time we dwell in so much temporal comfort, under such excellent government, with so little disturbance. To what can we attribute it to but this, that Jesus sits upon the throne, and rules Egypt for the good of Israel! And the world is made subservient to the blessedness of the Church of God! I must not tarry any longer, though it is a very tempting theme, but I want to take you on to the next shepherd.

Jesus Christ will be represented to you in quite a different character under the next illustration. Moses was not a ruler in Egypt, but quite a distinct character. Moses, when he kept sheep, kept them in the wilderness, far away from all other flocks; and when he became a shepherd over God's people Israel, his business was not to preserve them in Egypt, but to conduct them out of it. Here then, is a representation of Jesus Christ as *the Shepherd of a separated people*, called from among men, and made to be a distinguished nation, not numbered among the people. Jesus, like Moses, might have been a king. The devil said to Him, “All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.” The people would have taken Him, we read, and made Him a king, for He was naturally of royal race, but He refused. As Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, so Jesus Christ said, “Get you behind Me, Satan,” to all the pomp and glory of this present world, and preferred to take part with His poor, despised people, who were crushed down by the reigning powers in the Egypt of His days. Moses began his mission, you remember, by going to

Pharaoh and saying, “Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” Jesus Christ begins as the Shepherd of the separate ones by demanding that they should be let go from the bondage of their natural estate. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm, Moses fetches out his people from among the Egyptians; he works plagues and marvels, but he brings them all out. “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” not one child of God, not one sheep of His pasture, shall be left in the Egypt of sin and death. They shall all be made to go outside the camp—leaving even Goshen to go into a wilderness, because they must be alone with God, and they cannot worship Him in a land full of idols.

I might dwell for a long time on all the transactions of Moses in Egypt, and especially upon the paschal supper, all of which were, doubtless, typical of Him of whom the text says, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” Our main point is the great exodus of Moses, who at the head of all the tribes goes forth to Succoth. There they pitch their tents. By-and-by, they advance to Pi-hahiroth with the Red Sea before them. With Moses’ staff to lead the procession, they pass through the sea dry shod, and come absolutely into the wilderness of separation, as, beloved, every heir of heaven is brought right out of Egypt, led through the Red Sea of Jesus Christ’s blood, baptized into Jesus, and brought out into the separated position in the wilderness. Now, it is easy to see how Moses was a shepherd to the people while in the wilderness. He led them in all their wanderings. He was King in Jeshurun over the people whom God had given to him. When they needed food, his prayer brought down the manna or the quail; when they needed water, it was his voice that made the rock burst forth with floods, or his rod that smote and lo, the flinty rock gushed with torrents. If there were Amalekites to fight, the uplifted arm of Moses did more than the sharp sword of Joshua. They

sometimes received chastisement from him. He ground the golden calf to pieces, and threw the powder on water and made them drink it. They were equally dependent upon him for comfort, too; his speech distilled as the dew and dropped as the rain, the small rain upon the tender herbs. Moses, like a shepherd, had to carry all the people in his bosom as God's appointed messenger, and often did he find it a very weary load, so that he said, "I cannot bear the burden of this great people alone." You have here a suggestive type of Jesus Christ, the leader of the separated Church. Brethren, I think we may, all of us, not only catch the idea, but live it out; the Church is in the desert now. We have left the world; we have left its maxims, its customs, and its religion. We hate the world's religion as much as we do its irreligion. We have forsaken it for good, never to go back again; and though the flesh sometimes falls to lusting, and would desire to go back to the old bondage, yet, under the guidance of our Great Shepherd, who leads His people far away from Mizraim's polluted shore, we march onward by winding ways to the promised rest.

The last type I mean to give you is *David*. This shepherd represents *Jesus Christ*, not at all as the others, but *as King in the midst of His Church*. David, like Jesus Christ, begins his life with trials. He is anointed, and straightway he begins to suffer. The world's king recognizes him, fixes his eyes upon him, hurls the javelin at him, hunts him like a partridge on the mountains, and rests not till he himself is slain. Poor David is the apt picture of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh—hunted by the world's king who would desire to put Him down, and crush out His spark. David, at last, mounts to his throne, quietly and in peace he sits in Jerusalem as king over Israel and Judah; and even at this day, though the kings of the earth set themselves against Him, and their rulers take counsel together, yet this is the decree concerning our Lord, "Yet have I set My King upon My

holy hill of Zion.” That same shepherd who of old snatched the lamb out of the jaw of the lion, and delivered his sheep from the paw of the bear; that same Shepherd who, in pangs of death, took the lion of hell by the beard and slew him—that same Shepherd sits as King in the Jerusalem above, and all His saints delight to do Him homage! All hail, You Son of David! Reign forever! Hosanna unto You! Your enemies cannot dispossess You; You have smitten them terribly, and they shall yet feel the terror of Your arm. The Shepherd reigns, Jesus Christ is King of God’s Church, and one of these days, the reign of David will blossom into the reign of Solomon. We shall see Jesus Christ under a yet more glorious type, for He shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. There shall be no war with the Ammonites, no war anywhere! All enemies shall have been put beneath His feet, and the kings of the nations shall bow before Him, and they who dwell in the wilderness shall lick the dust. May that millennial splendor soon dawn, when the Son of David shall be King forever and ever as the great Shepherd, reigning over all lands. Think these five illustrations over and there will be much instruction here concerning Him who feeds His flock like a shepherd.

**II.** Now let the Christian, who is not weary, follow me in three **NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS.**

Jesus Christ the Shepherd, is described in the New Testament, as I dare say you all remember, in three ways. He is first of all spoken of as the *Good* Shepherd, next, as the *Great* Shepherd, and thirdly, as the *Chief* Shepherd. I do not know that any other adjective is appended to His name of Shepherd. First, turn to the 10th chapter of John, there you find Him described as the *Good* Shepherd. “The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Goodness is the special excellence which seems to gleam in the character of our Lord in His earthly life and in His passion for the sons of men. As I look



upon my Lord and Master here, despised and rejected of men, I know He is the Great Shepherd, but His greatness does not strike me because His flock is so few. We read in the Acts that, “the number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty.” “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” Herein is goodness, but the greatness is concealed. When He saw the multitude, He had compassion upon them, for they were as sheep having no shepherd. Here is the Good Shepherd—He healed their sicknesses and wept over their sins—here is goodness, indeed. When it was time for Him to die, He crossed the Brook Kidron, and suffered till He sweat great drops in the garden; He went to trial and condemnation, and then to the Mount of Doom to suffer, bleed, and die. Here is the Good Shepherd—the Good Shepherd bleeding for the sheep. Can you tell me *how* good a Shepherd Jesus was? Can you measure the height and depth of the extraordinary goodness that dwelt in Him?—so good that He saved others, Himself He could not save—so good, that when He rendered in His account, He could say, “I have lost none.” He had kept them all safe, though He Himself had bowed His head, and given up the ghost.

You will find in Hebrews 13:20, that He is called the *Great* Shepherd. Does that refer to his life on earth, and to His death? Not at all! Kindly observe the context, “Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” Do you understand? He is not the Great Shepherd when He dies—He is the Good Shepherd. But He is the Great Shepherd, when He is brought again from the dead. In the resurrection you perceive His greatness! He lies in the grave slumbering; He is the Good Shepherd then, having laid down

His life for the sheep. Life appears again in Him—the stone is rolled away, the watchmen are seized with terror, and He stands out the Risen One—no more dying! Now He is the Great Shepherd! He manifests Himself for 40 days among His own disciples, and then, at last, taking them to the hill of Galilee, a cloud receives Him out of their sight, and up He mounts as the Great Shepherd. When he has told them to go to Jerusalem, they sit waiting till the time of the fullness is come, and suddenly, there is heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and fiery tongues sit upon all of them. Who has given this gift to each? Who is it? This is the Great Shepherd! He has ascended on high, and has received gifts for men; the Shepherd, still, you see, but now he is the GREAT Shepherd, the Shepherd riding in triumphal state through the midst of new Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of angels, and sending to His sheep down below, the precious gift of apostles, and ministers of various orders, according to His own will. He was the Good Shepherd before—He is the Good Shepherd now—but He is also pre-eminently the Great Shepherd. Let us delight to think of this greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us extol and bless Him! Observe, carefully, that while the Good Shepherd lays down His life that you may have life, and have it more abundantly, He is the Great Shepherd for another purpose. What does it say? “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” Yes, He dies to wash away your sins, but He rises for your *justification* and your complete *sanctification*, that as the Lord left His grave clothes behind Him, you may leave your sins behind you, and as He left the tomb behind Him, never to reenter it, you may leave the old dead world in which you once lived, and live in newness of life.

We have a third text remaining—the first epistle of Peter, 5th chapter and fourth verse. Here you have the Savior called the *Chief* Shepherd. When is this? In Peter He is not the Good

Shepherd—He is not the Great Shepherd—He is all that, but He is a great deal more—He is the CHIEF Shepherd. When will He wear this title? Do you notice, beloved, this one thing? Let me have your hearts here. While He is the Good Shepherd, He is all alone, no other mentioned; while He is the Great Shepherd, He is still alone, and only a bare hint of others, but when He is the *Chief* Shepherd, it is implied that there are others among whom He is chief. Notice, then, that in the atonement Jesus is alone—there is no one with the Good Shepherd. In the resurrection for our justification He is alone—no one aids the Great Shepherd. But at the second advent, He will be with His people, Chief among many. Read the verse—“And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.” So you see, Christ is the *Chief* Shepherd at the second advent. Then shall the world be astonished to find that though alone in atonement, and alone in justification, He is not alone in service or in glory. Then every minister who has fed His sheep, every teacher who has fed His lambs—all of you, holy men and women, who have in any way whatever, contributed under Him towards the guidance, and the government, and the feeding, and the protection of His dear, blood-bought flock—you shall appear! He has no crown, you perceive, as the Good Shepherd; we do not read of a crown for Him as the Great Shepherd, but when He comes with the crown, with which His mother crowned Him, then shall you also appear with Him in glory, having the crown of life that fades not away.

I do not know whether this peculiar circumstance interests you, but it did me, when I observed it—*Good* in His dying, *Great* in His rising, *Chief* in His coming. It seems to me to gather such force—*Good* to me as a sinner—*Great* to me as a saint—*Chief* to me, as one with Him in His glorious reign! I pass, as it were, through three stages—a sinner, then I look to the Good

Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep; I reach higher ground, and I am a saint—I look to the Great Shepherd to make me perfect in every good work to do His will; I mount higher still—I die, I rise again, I walk in resurrection life—and now, I look to the Chief Shepherd, and hope to receive at His hands the crown of life, which He shall give to me, and not to me only, but unto all them who love His appearing—the Good, Great, Chief Shepherd! May God give us grace, meditating upon these things, to know them and enter into them.

**III. In conclusion, I promised one or two IMPRESSIVE APPLICATIONS.**

The first application is one of *comfort and satisfaction*, to you who are poor, needy, weary, and troubled lambs or sheep of the flock. Our own text runs thus, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” What next? “He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” The lambs have not the value of mature sheep, yet they are the most thought of under the Good Shepherd. They might fetch the least price in the market, but they have the greatest portion of His heart. You needy, troubled ones, I want you to look here, and note down in your memories, that though there are promises for all saints, there are special promises for you. Jesus Christ will take care that the lambs, and those who are with young, shall be specially housed. Notice this in Jacob, whom I introduced to you as the toiling shepherd—when he met with Esau, Esau wanted him to accept a guard to go with him, but Jacob said, “My lord knows that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.” Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will not travel at such a rate as to overdrive the lambs. He has tender consideration for the poor and needy. Kings usually look to the interests of the great and the rich, but in the kingdom of our Good

Shepherd, He cares most for the poor. “He shall judge the poor of the people.” The weaklings and the sickly of the flock are the special objects of the Savior’s care. A proof of this you find at the 34th chapter of Ezekiel, 16th verse, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick.” Inexpressibly comforting words to the broken, sick, needy, Christian!

You think, dear heart, that you are forgotten because of your nothingness, and weakness, and poverty? This is the very reason why you are remembered! There is a mother here this morning—she has seven children. I know what child she has been thinking of while we have been preaching. She has not been thinking of John, who is married and away, or of Mary who is in health, nor of Thomas who is sitting by her side. She has been thinking of the poor little one at home in bed, and she has wondered whether it has had any sleep this morning, and whether it has been well taken care of. You know that my guess is correct. Now Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, if He should forget those of us who are strong and in sound health, will be sure to remember the sickly ones! He shall feed His flock like a shepherd— He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom. He shall gently lead those that are with young.

A second application containing *comfort* and *warning* too. Sinner, to you our Lord Jesus Christ now represents Himself as being a Shepherd, who is come to seek and to save those who were lost. Here are his own words—“What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep

which was lost.” Such is Jesus now, looking after stray sheep. Where are you? Where are you this morning? The Great Shepherd comes after you, and oh, what joy will be in His heart—what joy there will be in heaven when the Great Shepherd shall throw you on His shoulders and bring you home!

But listen! Did you ever notice that the same Shepherd who saves the lost, will curse the finally impenitent? He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, “Depart you cursed!” What lips are those which pronounce those dreadful words? The Shepherd’s lips! The lips of that same Shepherd, who flies over the mountains to the lost sheep—of whom, I trust, it will yet be said, “We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” That same seeker of the lost, and gatherer together of them who are scattered, will say, “Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell prepared for the devil and his angels.” Oh, sinner, may you know the Shepherd as binding up your broken bones, and healing your wounds, and rejoicing over your saved soul, for if you do not, you will have to know Him in another and more terrible character, when He shall curse you, separating you from His own sheep, as the Shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

So we shall conclude with these words, which may be for both saint and sinner. Let it never be forgotten, that in all we have said about Jesus Christ, still, as a Shepherd, He is pre-eminently to be preached as the Suffering One. I began with Abel, and I must conclude with Abel. Zechariah has recorded these remarkable words of Jehovah, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My Fellow, says the Lord. Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” O

sinner, you have most of all to do today with the Abel-shepherd—with the Shepherd dead at the altar; with the Shepherd with His blood crying up to heaven, with the sword of Jehovah in His heart! You shall know about the toiling-shepherd, by-and-by. The Shepherd reigning in Egypt, the Joseph you shall know soon; the Shepherd of the separated flock, you shall follow before long; the Shepherd reigning in Jerusalem, the David, you shall rejoice to serve; but now, you have to do with the Shepherd bleeding and dying.

Listen to these words and I have done—“All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” In this is Jesus to be seen, suffering, bleeding, and dying, on yonder accursed tree! He is there, the Shepherd to whom if we look we shall live, and live forever! God enable you to turn those poor eyes of yours, which have been red with weeping over sin, or red with the drunkenness of wickedness, and see in Jesus Christ your iniquity put away, Jehovah reconciled, and your souls eternally saved. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —***

***John 10:1-18; 24-29.***

## **653 A BLOW FOR PUSEYISM – JOHN 6:63**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 8th, 1865,**

**by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“It is the Spirit who quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”**

**— John 6:63**

OUR LORD had plainly told His hearers that He was the Bread of Life; and that except they ate His flesh and drank His blood, there was no life in them. His hearers understood this in a sensual manner, and they very naturally put the question, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” Now, the Savior had never intended to be understood in a carnal manner. It was far enough from His design to teach the carnal eating of His body, and therefore He at once told them that His words were not understood; and delivered Himself of a great general principle, as truly applicable to our day as to His own. In effect, He taught them just this—“It is not the eating My flesh in a carnal way, even if you could do it, which would be of any service to you, for that would be only feeding the flesh, which profits nothing. A spiritual feeding can alone quicken and bless you. It is this which you cannot understand, and therefore, you hear My words as if they were as dead and fleshly as yourselves, whereas My teaching bears no gross and sensuous meaning, for the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”



If I am not mistaken, this verse contains a great principle which needs, in these days, to be proclaimed on the housetops. It is the medicine which would cure the diseases of this present time if men were divinely led to receive it. The text is very deep; like all the teaching of our Savior recorded by John, the words are extremely simple, but the mystery is most profound. May the Holy Spirit lead us all not only to comprehend its teaching, but to feel its power.

What is meant by "*the flesh*" here? The word "flesh," in Scripture, has 11 or 12 different modifications of its one abiding meaning. In this passage, it means that which is outward and sensuous, and appeals to the eye, or the ear, or to other powers of man's bodily nature. There was much of this in the Jewish faith; but whenever the worshippers rested in it, and did not reach to its *spiritual* teaching, it profited them nothing. Paul uses the same term when speaking to the Judaizing Galatians, he asks them, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" which we understand to mean, having begun by God's Holy Spirit with a spiritual love to God, a spiritual faith in Jesus, and a spiritual life within, do you mean, now, to be made perfect by external ordinances, resting and abiding in them as though they had a power to bless? External ceremonial religion is well and aptly set forth here as "flesh." What is the meaning of the term, "*spirit*," here? If the Holy Spirit had been intended, in the judgment of our translators, they would have placed a capital S. It cannot, however, refer to the Holy Spirit, because the explanatory key sentence is this—"The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit." Now, as we all know, *words* cannot be the Holy Spirit. The word "spirit" stands here in contrast with the term "flesh." Flesh is *external* religion, the carnal part of it—that which the eye sees and the ear hears. Spirit is the *inward* part of religion—that which the *soul* understands, receives, believes, and feeds

upon. It is this—this spiritual element in religion which quickens it, and makes it a living thing, while the mere external, the flesh, except as the Spirit quickens it, profits nothing. This spiritual religion is consistent with the spiritual nature which God the Holy Spirit gives to us, and as Christ's teachings are themselves living and spiritual, they are the proper food of spiritual men. The Jews commonly thought that religion lay in ceremonial observances, in eating certain meats or abstinence from them, in washings of the hands before eating, in various baptisms, in going up to the temple to pray, and such like outward performances. Jesus tells them to their faces that this flesh religion profits nothing; it is dead, unquickened, and unquickening!

What, then, is the life of godliness? What is the vitality and essence of acceptable worship? His answer virtually is, "It is not your outward observances, but your inward emotions, desires, beliefs, and adoration which are living worship." Then He adds, in effect, "My words are not concerning outward observances, but are of a spiritual character. I come not to you with, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not,' or with, 'Wash, vow, stand, sit, kneel'—My words deal with inner life and spirit, and are addressed to your spiritual natures. The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life."

I. Our first point will be **THE UNPROFITABLE FLESH**—the external observances of religion are, in themselves, utterly unprofitable.

To begin with, the greatest monstrosity of this kind in the present day, *the real and corporeal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in what is superstitiously called the Blessed Sacrament*. I would scarcely mention this if it were a doctrine merely of the Church of Rome, but when I read the newspapers and other productions of the High Church party, I find that transubstantiation, with all its fullness of absurdity, is extensively preached and believed in the

Church of England, and there are hundreds of clergy who speak of the Lord's Table as an "altar," and of the Supper as the celebration of a "sacrifice," while the *symbols* are spoken of as though they were to be revered even as the Lord Himself! It is laid down as a doctrine, that every time the bread is broken by these priests, the very body of Jesus Christ is actually received by the persons participating! That this is monstrously absurd, I think every intelligent person knows; but it has been said that the more absurd it is, the more room there is for faith, and now some have even been thankful for having its absurdity proven, "For," they have argued, "it will be the more meritorious for us to believe it." To such persons we would briefly say, if Jesus Christ's body is really received into your mouth, broken with your teeth, and made to enter into your stomach, then, in the first place, you are guilty of a gross act of cannibalism and nothing better, inasmuch as you eat human flesh. And, in the next place, you cannot derive any virtue from it, for Jesus Christ tells you at once, "It is the *Spirit* who quickens; the flesh profits nothing."

If you did actually eat the very body of Christ, it would affect your digestive and secretive organs, and through them your flesh, just as other bread, or, if you like it better, other flesh would do; and how could this affect your heart and soul? Does divine grace operate through the stomach, and save us through our bowels? Prove this, and you will make converts of us. But do not men receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper? Yes, *spiritual* men do, in a real and *spiritual* sense, but not in a carnal sort—not so as to crush it with their teeth, or taste it with their palate, or digest it by the gastric juices, but they receive the Lord Jesus, as incarnate and crucified, into their spirits, as they *believe* in Him, love Him, and are comforted by thoughts of Him. "But how is that a real reception of Him?" cries one! Alas, this question reveals at once the world's

thoughts; you think the carnal alone real, and that the spiritual is unreal. If you can touch and taste, you think it real, but if you can only meditate and love, you dream it to be unreal. How impossible it is for the carnal mind to enter into spiritual things! Yet, listen once again, I receive the body and blood of Christ when my soul believes in His incarnation, when my heart relies upon the merit of His death, when the bread and wine so refresh my memory that thoughts of Jesus Christ and His agonies melt me to penitence, cheer me to confidence, and purify me from sin. It is not my *body* which receives Jesus, but my *spirit*! I believe in Him, casting myself alone upon Him. Trusting Him, I feel joy and peace, love and zeal, hatred of sin, and love of holiness, and so as to my spiritual nature, I am fed upon Him.

My spiritual nature feeds upon truth, love, divine grace, promise, pardon, covenant, atonement, acceptance— all of which I find, and much more—in the Person of the Lord Jesus. Up to the extent in which my spirit has communion with the Lord Jesus, the ordinance of breaking of bread is living and acceptable, because the spiritual element quickens it. But to the extent in which I merely receive the bread and wine, and my spirit is not exercised about Jesus Christ—to that extent it profits me nothing— it is a mere external ceremony and nothing more. The bread is only bread, the wine is merely wine, the eating is simply eating bread and no more; the whole outward ceremony is what it seems to be, and not a jot more; but the unseen fellowship of hearts with Jesus, this is the quickening element, and this alone.

The same principle applies in the case of *baptism*. According to God's Word, baptism in both Romans 6:4, and Colossians 2:12, sets forth our union with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Is there anything in the water in which the person is immersed? Nothing whatever! Is there conveyed,

by the water, or in the water, any spiritual gift or grace? Not in any way except so far as this—if the water reminds the spiritual nature in the man of the death of Christ, then his spirit enjoys communion with Christ in His death; if the water forcibly portrays to him the Savior's burial, so that his spirit feels itself to be buried to the world; if rising out of the water reminds the man of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that he, in spirit, rises from a dead world into a newness of life, then there is life in the baptism. The Holy Spirit quickens it—but the mere water—the carnal part of the ordinance, in itself, profits nothing! The putting away of the filth of the flesh is nothing, but the answer of a good conscience toward God is the vitality of baptism. It is only vital up to the extent in which the spirit exercises itself. This speaks strongly against the baptism of infants. We do not enter on this subject from love of controversy, but the question is fairly involved in the subject. If the baptized person, infant or adult, enters in spirit into the meaning and teaching of baptism, he is truly baptized; but, inasmuch as in our firm conviction a baby does not enter in spirit into the subject at all, it has only received the unprofitable baptism of the flesh, since the Spirit which quickens was absent. Whether you are infants or adults, if your renewed spirit enters into the form, it quickens the form, and makes it live; but if you come to it without spiritual life, and without exercising spiritual emotions, the water, the fleshly part of the ordinance, profits you nothing. It is only as far as your spirit has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it—both in the act and in meditation upon it afterwards—that baptism becomes of the slightest possible profit to you. We put the two ordinances together, and say to you, you will find in these just as much as your spirit shall get from them, and not an atom more. Only as far as the symbol aids thought and emotion can it be of service; the outward does not profit a little, it profits nothing whatever.

Take next *the doctrine of the apostolic succession*. There are certain persons, still out of Bedlam, who say of all ministers but those of their own sect, no matter how much the Lord may have honored them in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, that they are intruders and not true ministers of Jesus Christ. Their clerics are the legitimate successors of the apostles, and they only. For the moment, we will allow the historical question—we will suppose that up to Judas, or some other apostle, they can trace a line through Popes of Rome, or Archbishops of Canterbury. We will suppose that a little stream comes trickling down to them through the dunghill of the Dark Ages, having its original rise in the apostolic era. Well, what now? Hear this Word of God—“The flesh profits nothing.” The mere fleshly connection between bishop and bishop established by successive laying on of hands and anointing is utterly valueless. The great question is concerning the spiritual succession! Do we see in you the same spirit that was in the apostles? Open your mouths, and let us hear the same simple, unadorned gospel which the apostles proclaimed. Let us hear you say with Paul, “You observe days and months, and times, and years, I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Let us hear from your lips the doctrines of grace, and faithful warnings against looking for salvation by our own works. Let us perceive that you are free from the beggarly elements of ceremonialism, and are not to be judged in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath (Col 2:16). Is there as little pomp about you as about the tentmaker of old? From where do these silk vestments, robes of fine linen, scarves of watered silk, silk bands, capes, and garments covered with gold and silver and embroidery come? The apostolic fishermen surely did not fish for souls in such fine garments!

Show us apostolic simplicity, faith, and truthfulness! We care not a fig either way for your fleshly succession. We demand that you prove your *spiritual* one. It was a tolerably impudent thing for a bishop once to say, in reference to John Williams, and other missionaries in the South Sea Islands, "They act as pioneers. They prepare the way for a more regular force. The missionary, in due time, is followed by the churchman who erects the converts into an orderly edifice, having for its foundation the lively stones of an apostolic priesthood, qualified to offer the oblation of a spiritual sacrifice." Now, my Lord Bishop, you shall, yourself, decide which is the more apostolic—yourself at home at ease, in enjoyment and luxury— or John Williams, traveling from island to island with his life in his hand, casting down idols by the power of the gospel, and transforming savages into Christians! You live in state, and he dies a martyr; you boast, and he toils; you talk of your own priesthood, and he of Jesus Christ; you are filled with zeal for a sect, and he with love for souls—surely if wit remains beneath your miter, you, yourself, can judge which of the two is the more apostolic! If the apostle Paul, himself, came to find out his successor, where would he look for him—in the missionary doing apostolic work, or in the bishop talking about what he will do after the other has laid the foundation, and stained it with his blood? When we see the divine calling of our honored pastors denied, and hear the impudent claims of a tribe of hireling priests, we can only cry, "To what an extent pretense may run!" Let them boast the fleshly succession, but let us seek spiritual union with the apostle's Lord. The Puseyites of our Savior's day said, "We have Abraham for our father," just as these say, "We are the successors of the apostles." And we meet our modern Pharisees with the same rebuke with which the Baptist met their ancient types, "They which are of faith, these are children

of Abraham,” and successors of the apostles, too. Let us remain content with spiritually following Jesus, and doing His work; and let the sons of the bondwoman boast a worthless fleshly succession if they will—“It is the Spirit who quickens; the flesh profits nothing.”

These things more concern other people than ourselves, therefore, let us come a little nearer home. Much is said nowadays about *an ornate form of worship*. The excellency of melodious music is much extolled; the swell of the organ, it is said, begets a hallowed frame of mind. But how far is the effect sensuous, and how far spiritual? Is it not to be feared that an anthem in a service is often no more a spiritual exercise than a glee at a concert? Music has charms, and he who cannot feel them is to be pitied; but, acceptable heart worship is quite another thing—no arrangement of notes and chords can ever do the work of God the Holy Spirit. Unless music can aid in making sinners penitent, in leading souls to Jesus Christ, or uplifting saints in holy joy to the throne of God, we must hold that, in vital godliness, it profits nothing.

*Architecture*, with its arched roofs and noble pillars, and dim religious light, is supposed to impart a reverence and awe which befit the solemn engagements of Sunday, and draw the mind towards the invisible God. Well, if combinations of stone can sanctify the spirit of man, it is a pity that the gospel did not prescribe architecture as the remedy for the ruin of the Fall; if gorgeous buildings make men love God, and long-drawn aisles renovate men’s spiritual nature, build, all you builders, both day and night! If bricks and mortar can lead us to heaven, alas, for the confusion which stopped the works at Babel. If there is such a connection between spires and spiritual things as to make human hearts beat in unison with the will of God, then build high and loftily, and lavish your gold and silver; but if all that you produce is sensuous, and nothing more, then turn to



living stones, and seek to build up a spiritual house with spiritual means.

We are told, nowadays, that *the pompous array of ministering priests, the beauty of symbolism*, the painting of windows, the smoke of incense, and so on, tend to draw people into the place of worship, and that when there, they aid in elevating their minds. What does Scripture say about it all? This thing was tried among the Jews, and Christ's remark when He comes to sum up the long trial is, "It is the Spirit who quickens; the flesh profits nothing." The real inward spirit of man is not blessed by sounds which charm the ear, but appeal not to the understanding, nor by colors which delight the eye, but gladden not the affections of man. To gratify taste is well enough for the carnal, but it profits nothing in the sight of God. It may be as well to be artistic as to be plain, but it is of no matter either way if tested by the Word of God—in the balances of the sanctuary, these matters are lighter than vanity.

We must make precisely the same remark concerning *eloquence*. Here we deal more closely with our own brothers, who, in this thing, look to the flesh as others do. Many persons have come to think that oratorical ability is essential in the minister. It is not enough, some think, to preach the truth with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven—we must also preach it in the wisdom of words with excellency of speech. The trappings of oratory and the drapery of eloquence are thought to be profitable. Ah, dear friends, one half of the emotions excited in our places of worship are of no more value than those excited at the theater. The mere ring of words is no more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. "The flesh profits nothing." So far as the truth of God itself moves our inmost souls, preaching is of real service; but if that which you hear only commends itself to you because of the sweet voice that speaks it— or the telling tones in which it is delivered—your

hearing is a carnal exercise, and profits you nothing! It is only when your spirit grasp the truths, when your heart embraces Christ, when your soul beholds God by the eye of faith, that you derive benefit.

We may bring this principle to bear on the revivals over which we have watched with much hope, but with more anxiety. In many revivals, there has been too much aim at getting up an excitement, a carnal enthusiasm. Excited persons pray one after the other, excited persons speak, and the stamp and motion of the hand, and the tear trickling from the eyes—all these are supposed to be of great service. I grant you that excitement may sometimes be used by God to stir the spirit of man, but unless, my dear hearers, your religion is based on something *more* than animal excitement, it is based upon a lie! Your *spirit* must come to know its ruin before God, and be humbled; your spirit must come to take hold of Jesus Christ and believe in Him; your spirit must undergo the divine change which only God the Holy Spirit can work—or else that excitement shall be nothing more than the blowing up of a bubble which shall burst and leave not a trace behind. Take care of any religion which merely tickles your fancy, excites your passions, or stirs your blood. True grace penetrates the very core of our nature, it changes the heart, subdues the will, renews the passions, and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus!

To come yet closer to ourselves, in the matter of prayer and the ordinances of God's house, I am afraid we too often forget this great rule, that it is the Holy Spirit who quickens, and that the flesh profits nothing. We pray, I suppose, as a matter of habit, every morning and evening, but how often we spend our few minutes, and we rise from our knees satisfied, and if anybody should ask, "Have you been praying?" We would say, "Yes," but it has been the *flesh* prayer, the dead form without the life of the heart. In reality, there has been no prayer

at all. It has been the flesh, which profits nothing. It is only that prayer in which the spirit talks with God that is real prayer. The carnal man is quite satisfied if he can get through a certain string of expressions, but the spiritual man is not content with this. Luther used to complain very much of distractions in prayer, and some said they could not understand it. “No,” Luther might have said, “I dare say you cannot, for, being unspiritual, you do not understand spiritual difficulties.” Bernard complained much of the wandering of his thoughts in prayer, and when someone said he thought Bernard must be a very great sinner to let his thoughts wander so, Bernard said, “I will give you a test. I will give you a horse if you can say the Lord’s Prayer and think of nothing else.” So the man began, “Our Father which are in heaven,” when he stopped short, and turning around, said, “But you must give me the bridle to get him home with.” So hard is it to keep the mind upon the object of devotion. While the sinner’s words are going up to God, he thinks that he is praying, but he has not prayed at all unless his heart has talked with God. Why, brethren, some of the best prayers that have ever been prayed had not a single word to express them with; they were *heart* prayers, and went up to heaven in all their naked unclothed glory, like disembodied spirits, and God accepted them. Many a prayer that has had the choicest words to garnish it has been nothing but a dead prayer wrapped up in grave clothes, and only fit to be cast into the grave forever.

So with public worship. You would feel unhappy if you had spent the whole Sunday without going to a place of worship—but you are quite at ease if you come here and leave your hearts at home. When we are singing, you sing with us; and when we are praying, you cover your eyes, too; and when we are preaching, some of you think of what I am talking about, and some do not. But when you get through the appointed hour,

you feel quite easy—but oh, remember that the mere carnal act of being here profits nothing! Oh, dear friends, shake off the idea that going up to a place of worship, or opening a Bible, or reading family prayer, or kneeling down, can, as mere acts, save your souls! I do not speak against them as to their profit in some respects, but as to *salvation* and the real vital work which is acceptable before God, the mere *form* profits nothing! It is only as your *spirit* prays, as your *spirit* seeks, as your *spirit* worships, as your *spirit* listens to God's Word, that there is any quickening power in it whatever!

Once more. There are certain persons who take considerable delight in having seen, as they think, visions and other manifestations of Christ with their eyes—and having heard certain texts mysteriously spoken in their ears. Now, I am not going to deny that you may have seen these visions and heard these sounds; I do not think you did, but whether you did or not is no matter—*they profit you nothing*. That which merely comes to this eye is nothing—it must come to the *soul's* eye of faith; that which comes to this ear is nothing unless it gets into the heart's ear—unless your *soul* hears it. If I were to see all the devils in hell, I should not think myself damned because of that; and if you have seen all the angels in heaven, you must not think you are saved because of that. It is not what a man sees with his eyes, or hears with his ears—it is what the spirit receives which saves the soul. “God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship him in *spirit* and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.”

## II. The text mentions the **QUICKENING SPIRIT**.

That which puts life into our religion is its being received and acted out by a spiritual nature. For, first of all, *it is the spiritual nature which quickens the man*. The man who has not received, by the work of God the Holy Spirit, a spiritual nature is described by Paul as being dead in trespasses and sins. The

Spirit finds men carnal, and breathes into them a new and better nature, and then they become what they never were before, quickened, *spiritual* men. This spirit of theirs is a quickening spirit, for *it quickens all the ordinances*. A carnal man is baptized, but it is the fleshly baptism which profits nothing. A spiritual man comes to baptism, and he is baptized, and he quickens the baptism; it becomes a real living baptism to him, for he has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it. A carnal man comes to the Lord's Supper, and he eats and drinks, what? "Damnation unto himself, not discerning the Lord's body." A spiritual man comes there, and he eats and drinks, and what, then? Why it becomes a living ordinance to him—the bread sets forth to him the body of Christ, and the wine sets forth the blood—and in spirit, he feeds upon his incarnate Savior. The possession of a spiritual nature, and the exercise of that spiritual nature in the ordinances, quickens them. So it is with prayer. The mere act of speaking one form of words is of no more profit than the repeating of any other. The Lord's Prayer, said backwards, is quite as acceptable to God as the Lord's Prayer said forwards unless the spirit enters into it. You might as well repeat the multiplication table as repeat the prayer of the day as far as God is concerned, unless your spirit prays. But when the spirit is engaged in repentance, in faith, in joy, in love—then the prayer is quickened. So with all the actions of man's life; if I give bread to the hungry, if I visit the sick, if I contribute to a good cause—that is all nothing unless my heart is in the deed. But if I feed the poor, because I love Jesus, if I seek to glorify God in my deeds of charity and holiness, they become living actions. Apart from all that, they profit nothing to me before God. The spiritual part of my nature must quicken my whole life, and make it real life, or else it will be a dead carnal existence before the Lord.

The spiritual nature *has for its Author the divine Father*. The 65th verse of the chapter, in which our text is found, tells us that no man can come unto Christ except it is given him of the Father. To be spiritual is a gift of God the Father. He has begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The new life is *the actual operation of the Holy Spirit*—no man becomes spiritual except the Holy Spirit enters into him. Deity comes into contact with humanity, and quickens the spiritual man. *The mark by which this spirituality is discovered is faith*. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Every man, who rests upon Christ for salvation, has the proof of his being spiritual. Modes of speech, or dress, or worship are not the marks of the spiritual—only simple, spiritual faith in the Lord Jesus is.

True religion has always been spiritual, but mere professors have always been content with the outward form alone. Among the Jews, when symbols were abundant, the mass either stuck fast in the types, and could get no farther, or else they went clean away to idolatry. In these latter times, the Lord has taken away almost all that is ceremonial in our religion. Two simple forms alone remain; and now there is another grand trial to see whether men can live in a spiritual religion, and that trial has come to prove just this—that none can do so but those who are born of God. The most of mankind cannot get on with a religion in which there is nothing to *see*, nothing to please the *ear*, or to gratify their *taste*. It is only the *spiritual* man, who is so overwhelmed with the glories of God, that he does not need the glories of man. He is so overcome with the splendor of Christ, that he does not need the splendor of the masses! He is so taken up with the magnificence of the Great High Priest that he does not care for gorgeously appareled priests! Blessed is that man who sees, though his eyes are blind; who hears, though his ears are deaf; who tastes, though his appetite fails;

who lives, though his heart and flesh fail—blessed is he who sees Him who is invisible, and has revealed unto him what eye has not seen, and what ear has not heard.

This will not suit many of you. A religion of thinking and believing is too hard for you. Repenting, believing, trusting—these things men will not do. They will kneel down any quantity of times, they will even, if told by a priest, lick the floor with their tongues—or they will walk with peas in their shoes, or whip their backs—but when it comes to believing, hoping, trusting, fearing, and so on, men are so little inclined to mental operations, especially under the dictation of a higher authority, that they will not have anything to do with them. “What?” they say, “a religion in which there is nothing for me to see! What? An unseen altar?” Yes, an unseen altar. “Am I not to see the sacrifice?” No. “Never to see it? Then I do not understand it. What? A God, but no symbols! No crucifixes! No crosses! What? No holy wafer, no sacred place, nothing sacred?” No, nothing visible to be revered, nothing whatever but the unseen God. “What? Not even my place of worship, is not *that* to be holy?” No, if you are a Christian, all places must alike be sacred to you. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” You must be *yourself* a temple, and God must dwell in you! You must be *yourself* a priest, and everywhere you must offer spiritual sacrifice. “The spirit quickens, but the flesh profits nothing.”

**III. The Savior tells us in the closing sentence THAT HIS WORDS ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE.**

Beloved, never was there a more true sentence spoken. Listen to other teachers, and you get precepts concerning washing, eating, bowing, etc., which are fleshly. But hear Jesus and His words—they all aim at the heart. Listen to the Puseyite and hear his word—“You should take care to attend Matins,

and early celebrations in our holy and beautiful church; you should decorate the altar, get a gowned choir, have processions, and put on the holy garments.”

Now, you see at once that these are not *spiritual* things—these are not life. Ritual performances are very pretty spectacles for silly young ladies, and sillier men to gaze upon—but there is no shadow of spirit or life in them. The High Church ritual does not look like a divine thing; on the contrary, if I stand among the throng and gaze at all its prettiness, it looks amazingly like a nursery game, or a stage play. Lack of taste, you say. Not so, I reply. My eyes admire your glittering colors, and the splendor of your services is taking to me, as a man. I enjoy the swell of your organ, and I can even put up with the smell of your incense (if you buy it good), but my *spirit* does not care for these fooleries—it turns away sickened, and cries, “There is nothing here for me; there is no more nourishment for the spirit in all this than there is food for man in a swine’s trough!” The words of Jesus Christ are throughout unceremonial and unformal—they are spirit and they are life—and we turn to them with all the greater zeal after having seen enough of your childish things.

On my Lord’s words I fix my hope in the battle now waging with ceremonialism, and I wish that all ministers of Christ would scorn to use any other weapons. I know the talk is that we ought to vie with the false churches in the beauty of our services—but this is a temptation of the devil! If the simple preaching of the cross will not attract the people, let them go away; let the Lord’s servants renounce the sword and shield of Saul, and go forth with the gospel sling and stone. Our weapons are the Words of Jesus—these are spirit, and these are life. Architecture, apparel, music, liturgies—these are neither spirit nor life—let those rest on them who will; we can do without them, by God’s help. Our sires, in the Puritan age, fought and



won the battles of Christ without these things. In later days, Whitefield stirred his age with nothing but the Word of God. Rowlands and Christmas Evans roused the men of Wales with no attraction but the cross.

My dear brothers in Christ, ministers of the gospel who are now present—let me beseech you—stand to the gospel! Set your backs against the tendency of the times to depart from the simplicity of Jesus Christ! If men will not come to hear us because we preach the gospel, draw them by no other attraction! I rejoice in the vast crowd so constantly assembled here because my enemies, themselves, are witnesses that there is nothing in me to which the honor can be ascribed! An uplifted Savior still draws all men to Him!

Dear friends, pray that the great and blessed Spirit, who first gives spiritual life, may continue to feed, and nourish, and perfect that life in you until you shall come to that heaven where ALL is spiritual, where they need no candles, nor light of the sun; where no temple is found, because the Lord God and the Lamb is the temple; where spiritual life shall be developed into its purest form; where, in spiritual bodies, you shall see the spiritual God, and reign before His throne, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —***

***John 6:26.***

**654 MEMORY, THE HANDMAID OF HOPE –**  
**LAM. 3:21**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 15th, 1865,  
by the**

**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” —  
Lamentations 3:21**

MEMORY IS very often the servant of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past and every gloomy feature in the present. Memory stands like a handmaiden clothed in sackcloth, presenting to her master a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. Like Mercury, she hastens with winged heel to gather fresh thorns with which to fill the uneasy pillow, and to bind fresh rods with which to scourge the already bleeding heart. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom will transform Memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection, which may, in its left hand, bring so many dark and gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars. When Christian, according to Bunyan, was locked up in Doubting Castle, Memory formed the crab-tree club with which the famous giant beat his captives so terribly. They remembered how they had left the right road, how they had been warned not to do so, and how in rebellion

against their better selves, they wandered into By-Path Meadow. They remembered all their past misdeeds, their sins, their evil thoughts and evil words, and all these were so many knots in the club, causing sad bruises and wounds, in their poor suffering bodies. But one night, according to Bunyan, this same Memory which had scourged them, helped to set them free; for she whispered something in Christian's ear, and he cried out as one half amazed, "What a fool I am to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise; that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." So he put his hand into his bosom, and with much joy he plucked out the key, and thrust it into the lock; and though the lock of the great iron gate, as Bunyan says, "went damnable hard," yet the key did open it, and all the others, too; and so, by this blessed act of Memory, poor Christian and Hopeful were set free!

Observe that the text records an act of memory on the part of Jeremiah—"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." In the previous verse, he tells us that memory had brought him to despair—"My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." And now, he tells us that, this same memory brought him to life and comfort, yet again—"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." We lay it down, then, as a general principle, that if we would exercise our memories a little more, we might, in our very deepest and darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing, in order to restore believers to joy. If they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as before.

I shall apply that general principle to the cases of three persons.

**I. First of all, to THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE.**

This is no unusual position for an heir of glory. A Christian is seldom long at ease—the believer in Jesus Christ, through much tribulation inherits the kingdom. If you will kindly turn to the chapter which contains our text, you will observe a list of matters which recollection brought before the mind of the prophet Jeremiah, and which yielded him comfort. First stands the fact that *however deep may be our present affliction, it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed*. This is a low beginning certainly. The comfort is not very great, but when a very weak man is at the bottom of the pyramid, if he is ever to climb it, you must not set him a long step at first; give him but a small stone to step upon, the first time, and when he gets more strength, then he will be able to take a greater stride. Now, consider, you sons of sorrow, where you might have been. Look down now through the gloomy portals of the grave, to that realm of darkness which is as the Valley of the Shadow of Death, full of confusion, and without any order. Can you discern the sound as of the rushing to and fro of hosts of guilty and tormented spirits? Do you hear their sorrowful wailing, and their fearful gnashing of teeth? Can your ears endure to hear the clanking of their chains, or your eyes to see the fury of the flames? They are forever, forever, forever shut out from the presence of God, and shut in with devils and despair! They lie in flames of misery so terrible that the dream of a despairing maniac cannot realize their woe. God has cast them away, and pronounced His curse upon them, appointing them blackness of darkness forever. This might have been your lot. Contrast your present position with theirs, and you have cause rather to sing, than to lament! “Why should a living man complain?” Have you seen those foul dungeons of Venice? They are below the watermark of the canal, where, after winding through narrow, dark, stifling

passages, you may creep into little cells in which a man can scarcely stand upright, where no ray of sunlight has ever entered since the foundations of the palace were laid! They are cold, foul, and black with damp and mildew—the fit nursery of fever and abode of death!

And yet, those places it would be luxury to inhabit compared with the everlasting burnings of hell. It were an excess of luxury to lost spirits, if they could lie there with moss growing on their eyelids, in lonely misery, if they might but escape for a little season from a guilty conscience, and the wrath of God. Friend, you are neither in those dungeons nor yet in hell; therefore pluck up courage and say, “It is of the Lord’s mercy we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” Slender comfort this may be, but then, if this flame shall yield but little heat, it may lead to something better. When you are kindling your household fire, before which you hope to sit down with comfort, you do not first expect to kindle the lumps of coal, you set some lighter fuel in a blaze, and soon the more solid material yields a genial glow. So this thought, which may seem so light to you, may be as the kindling of a heavenly fire of comfort for you who now are shivering in your grief.

Something better awaits us, for Jeremiah reminds us that there are some mercies, at any rate, which are still continued. *“His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.”* You are very poor and have come down from wealth. This is very difficult; still, you are in good health. Just walk into the hospital, ask to be permitted to witness the work done in the operating room; sit down by one bedside and listen to the story of pain and weariness; and surely you will leave the hospital feeling, “I thank God that with all my poverty, I have not sickness to complain of, and therefore I will sing of the mercies which I enjoy.” Are you sick, and have you dragged your weary body to this house this morning? Then I shall invite

you to accompany me to those dark cellars and miserable attics, where poverty pines away in wretched unpitied obscurity in the heart of this great city; and if you note the hard-earned meal, too scant to yield sufficient refreshment, and the miserable heap of straw which is their only rest, you will escape from the foul den of filthy poverty, and say, “I will bear my sickness, for even that is better than filth, starvation, and nakedness.” Evil your plight may be, but there are others in a still worse condition. You can always, if you open your eyes and choose to do so, see at least this cause for thankfulness—that you are not yet plunged into the lowest depth of misery.

There is a very touching little story told, of a poor woman with two children who had not a bed for them to lie upon, and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen, and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges, and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep that some of the draft and cold might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her when she complained of how badly off they were, “Mother, what do those dear little children do, who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?” Even there, you see, the little heart found cause for thankfulness; and we, if we are driven to our worst extremity, will still honor God by thanking Him that His compassions fail not, but are new every morning. This, again, is not a very high step, but still, it is a little in advance over the other, and the weakest may readily reach it.

The chapter offers us a third source of consolation. “*The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.*” You have lost much Christian, but you have not lost your portion. Your God is your all; therefore, if you have lost all but God, still you have your all left, since God is all. The text does not say that God is a part of our portion, but the whole portion of our spirit. In Him we have all the riches of our heart

concentrated. How can we be bereaved since our Father lives? How can we be robbed since our treasure is on high? It is daylight and the sun is shining bright, and I have a candle lit, but someone blows it out. Shall I sit down and weep because my candle is extinguished? No, not while the sun shines. If God is my portion, if I lose some little earthly comfort I will not complain, for heavenly comfort remains. One of our kings, high and haughty in temper, had a quarrel with the citizens of London, and thought to alarm them by a dreadful threat that would cow the spirits of the bold citizens, for if they did not mind what they were doing, he would remove his Court from Westminster. Whereupon, the Lord Mayor begged to inquire whether His Majesty meant to take the Thames away, for so long as the river remained, His Majesty might take himself wherever he pleased! Even so, the world warns us, "You cannot hold out, you cannot rejoice—this trouble shall come and that adversity shall befall." We reply, "So long as you cannot take our Lord away, we will not complain." "Philosophers," said the wise man, "can dance without music." And true believers in God can rejoice when outward comforts fail them. He who drinks from the bottle, as did the son of the bondwoman, may have to complain of thirst; but he who dwells at the well as did Isaac, the child according to promise, he shall never know lack! God grant us grace, then, to rejoice in our deepest distress, because the Lord is our sure possession, our perpetual heritage of joy. We have now advanced to some degree of hope, but there are other steps to ascend.

The prophet then reminds us of another channel of comfort, namely, that God is forevermore good to all who seek Him. *"The Lord is good unto them who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him."* Let Him smite ever so hard, yet if we can maintain the heavenly posture of prayer, we may rest assured that He will turn from blows to kisses. When a beggar wants alms, and

is very needy, if he sees another beggar at the door of some great man, he will watch while he knocks, and when the door is opened and the man is liberally entertained, and generously helped, he who has been looking on knocks with boldness in his turn. My soul, are you very sad and very low this morning? The Lord is good to them who seek Him. Thousands have come from His door, but none have had reason to complain of a cold reception, for in every case, He has filled the hungry with good things. Therefore, my soul, go boldly and knock, for He gives liberally and upbraids not. In all states of dilemma or of difficulty, prayer is an available source. Bunyan tells us that when the City of Mansoul was besieged, it was the depth of winter and the roads were very bad, but even then, prayer could travel them; and I will venture to affirm that if all earthly roads were so bad that they could not be traveled, and if Mansoul were so surrounded that there was not a gap left through which we could break our way to get to the king, yet the road upwards would always be open. No enemy can barricade that; no blockading ships can sail between our souls and the haven of the mercy seat. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the throne of God; and though she may be outward bound with only griefs, and groans, and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings. There is hope then, Christian, for you are allowed *to pray*—

“The mercy seat is open still,  
Here let our souls retreat.”

We are getting into deeper water of joy, let us take another step, and this time we shall win still greater consolation, from the fact that it is good to be afflicted! *“It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth.”* A little child needs to be coaxed to take



its medicine. It may be very ill, and mother may assure it that this medicine will work its cure; but the child says, “No, it is so bitter, I cannot take it.” But men need not thus to be persuaded. The bitter is nothing to them; they think of the health which it will bring, and so they take the draught, and do not even wince. Now we—if we are little children, and have not called to remembrance the fruit which affliction bears—may cry and murmur. But if we are men and women in Christ Jesus, and have learned that “All things work together for good to them who love God,” we shall take the cup right cheerfully and willingly, and bless God for it. Why should I dread to descend the shaft of affliction if it leads me to the gold mine of spiritual experience? Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises, with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky? Go sun, for in your absence we shall see ten thousand suns! And when your blinding light is gone, we shall see worlds in the dark which were hidden from us by your light. Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink which you cannot read till the fire of trouble brings out the letters. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Your statutes.” Beloved, Israel went into Egypt poor, but they came out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They had worked, it is true, at the brick kilns, and suffered bitter bondage, but they were bettered by it; they came out enriched by all their tribulations.

A child had a little garden in which it planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought, tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up, but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father's gardener, and when he came to look at it, he said, “I will make it a nice garden for you that you may grow whatever you want.” He fetched a pick, and when the little

child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground, and began to make the earth heave and shake, for his pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which lay under almost all the little plot of ground. All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet, and so he did, for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root he soon filled the ground with flowers which lived and flourished. And so the Lord has come, and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort, to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity, and would not let your soul flourish. Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results, and thank your Father's tender hand.

One step more, and surely we shall then have good ground to rejoice. The chapter reminds us that these troubles do not last forever. When they have produced their proper result they will be removed, for *"The Lord will not cast off forever."* Who told you that the night would never end in day? Who told you that the sea would ebb out till there should be nothing left but a vast track of mud and sand? Who told you that the winter would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest? Who told you this, I say? Do you not know that day follows night? That flood comes after ebb? That spring and summer succeed winter? Then have hope! Hope forever! God fails you not! Do you not know that your God loves you in the midst of all this? Mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as in daylight, and God's love is as true to you now as it was in your brightest moments. No father chastens always—he hates the rod as much as you do! He only cares to use it for that reason which should make you willing to receive it, namely, that it works your

lasting good. You shall yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels, and behold Him who sits at the top of it—your covenant God. You shall yet, amidst the splendors of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led you through them, and worked your lasting good by them! Come, sing on your bed! Rejoice amidst the flames! Make the wilderness blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with your exalting joys! These light afflictions will soon be over, and then "Forever with the Lord," your bliss shall never wane!

Thus, dear friends, memory may be as Coleridge calls it, "The bosom spring of joy," and when the Holy Spirit bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

## **II. For a short time, we will speak TO THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN WHO HAS LOST HIS EVIDENCES OF SALVATION.**

It is our habit, in our ministry, to avoid extremes as much as possible, and to keep to the narrow path of the truth of God. We believe in the doctrine of predestination, we believe in the doctrine of free agency, and we follow the narrow path between those mountains; so in all other truths of God. We know some who think that doubts are not sins—we regret their thinking that. We know others who believe doubts to be impossible where there is any faith—we cannot agree with them. We have heard of persons ridiculing that very sweet and admirable hymn, beginning—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

We dare not ridicule it ourselves, for we have often had to sing it—we wish it were not so, but we are compelled to confess that doubts have vexed us. The true position, with regard to the doubts and fears of believers, is just this—that they are sinful, and are not to be cultivated, but to be avoided; but that, more or less, most of Christians do suffer them, and

that they are no proof of a man's being destitute of faith, for the very best of Christians have been subject to them. To you who are laboring under anxious thought I now address myself.

Let me *bid you to remember in the first place matters of the past*. Shall I pause and let your heart talk to you? Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Perhaps you do not. Well, do you remember happy seasons when He has brought you to the banqueting house? Cannot you remember gracious deliverances? "I was brought low and He helped *me*." "You have been *my* help." When you were in those past circumstances, you thought yourselves in overwhelming trouble. You have passed through them, and cannot you find comfort in them? At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy that when the frail boats of the Portuguese went sailing south, they named it the Cape of Storms; but after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many Capes of Storms, but you have weathered them all, and now, let them be a, Capes of Good Hopes, to you. Remember, "You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." Say with David, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Do I not remember this day some Hill Mizars, where my soul has had such sweet fellowship with God, that she thought herself in heaven? Can I not remember moments of awful agony of soul, when in an instant my spirit leaped to the topmost heights of ecstasy at the mention of my Savior's name? Have there not been times with me at the Lord's table, in private prayer, and in listening to His Word, when I could say—

"My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,

And sit and sing herself away,  
To everlasting bliss”?

Well, let me remember this, and have hope, for—

“Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is forever mine!”

He never loved where He afterwards hates; His will never changes. It is not possible that He who said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands,” should ever forget or cast away those who once were dear to Him.

Possibly, however, that may not be the means of comfort to some of you. Recall, I pray, the fact that *others have found the Lord true to them*. They cried to God and He delivered *them*. Do you not remember your mother? She is now in heaven, and you her son are toiling and struggling onward here below. Do not you recollect what she told you before she died? She said God had been faithful and true to her. She was left a widow, and you were but a child then, and she told you how God provided for her, and for you, and the rest of that little needy family in answer to her pleadings. Do you believe your mother’s testimony, and will you not rest with your mother’s faith upon your mother’s God? There are gray heads here who would, if it were the proper season, testify to you that in an experience of 50 and 60 years in which they have walked before the Lord in the land of the living, they cannot put their finger upon any date and say, “Here God was unfaithful,” or, “Here He left me in the time of trouble.” I, who am but young, have passed through many and sore tribulations after my sort, and can say and must say it, for if I speak not, the timbers of this house might cry out against my ungrateful silence—He is a faithful God, and He remembers His servants, and leaves them not in

the hour of their trouble. Hearing our testimonies, cannot you say in the words of the text, “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope”?

Remember, again, and perhaps this may be consolatory to you, that though you think you are not a child of God at all now, yet *if you look within, you will see some faint traces of the Holy Spirit's hand*. The complete picture of Christ is not there, but cannot you see the crayon sketch—the outline—the charcoal marks? “What,” you say, “do you mean?” Do you want to be a Christian? Have you not desires after God? Cannot you say with the psalmist, “My heart and my flesh pants after God—after the living God”? Oh, I have often had to console myself with this, when I could not see a single Christian grace beaming in my spirit, I have had to say, “I know I shall never be satisfied until I get to be like my Lord.” One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see—see enough, at least, to know my own defects, and emptiness, and misery; and I have just enough spiritual life to feel that I want more, and that I cannot be satisfied unless I have more. Well, now, where God the Holy Spirit has done as much as that, He will do more. Where He begins a good work, we are told He will carry it on and perfect it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Call that to mind, brethren, and you may have hope.

But I would remind you that *there is a promise in this book that exactly describes and suits your case*. A young man had been left by his father heir of all his property, but an adversary disputed his right. The case was to come on in the court, and this young man, while he felt sure that he had a legal right to the whole, could not prove it. His legal adviser told him that there was more evidence needed than he could bring. How to get this evidence he did not know. He went to an old chest where his father had kept his papers, turned all out, and as he turned the writings over, and over, and over, there was an old parchment.

He undid the red tape with great anxiety and there it was—the very thing he needed—his father's will—in which the estate was spoken of as being left entirely to himself. He went into court boldly enough with that! Now, when we get into doubts, it is a good thing to turn to this old book, and read until at last we can say, "That is it—that promise was made for me." Perhaps it may be this one— "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Jacob will not forsake them." Or this one—"Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." May I beg you to rummage the old book through? And you, poor doubting, despairing Christian, will soon stumble on some precious parchment, as it were, which God the Holy Spirit will make to you the title-deed of immortality and life.

If these recollections should not suffice, I have one more. You look at me, and you open your ears to find what new thing I am going to tell you. No, I am going to tell you nothing new, but yet it is the best thing that was ever said out of heaven, "*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*" You have heard that a thousand times—and is the best music you have ever heard! If I am not a saint, I am a sinner; and if I may not go to the throne of grace as a child, I will go as a sinner. A certain king was accustomed on set occasions to entertain all the beggars of the city. Around him sat his courtiers, all clothed in rich apparel; the beggars sat at the same table in their rags of poverty. Now, it came to pass, that on a certain day, one of the courtiers had spoiled his silken apparel so that he dared not put it on, and he felt, "I cannot go to the king's feast today, for my robe is foul." He sat weeping till the thought struck him, "Tomorrow, when the king holds his feast, some will come as courtiers happily decked in their beautiful array, and others will come and be made quite as welcome, who will be dressed in rags. Well, well," he said, "as long as I may see the king's face and sit at the king's

table, I will enter with the beggars.” So, without mourning because he had lost his silken habit, he put on the rags of a beggar, and he saw the king’s face as well as if he had worn his scarlet and fine linen.

My soul has done this full many a time, and I bid you do the same; if you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner, only come, and you shall receive joy and peace. There was a lamentable accident which occurred in the North in one of the coal pits, when a considerable number of miners were down below, when the top of the pit fell in, and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were down below sat together in the dark, and sang and prayed. They gathered to a spot where the last remains of air below could be breathed. There they sat and sang after the lights had gone out, because the air would not support the flame. They were in total darkness, but one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit that had been worked years ago. He said it was a low passage, through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground—he would go and see—the passage was very long, but they crept through it, and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other pit and their lives were saved. If my present way to Christ as a saint gets blocked up, if I cannot go straight up the shaft, and see the light of my Father up yonder, there is an old working, the old fashioned way by which sinners go, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go—come, I will crawl along lowly and humbly, flat upon the ground—I will crawl along till I see my Father, and cry, “Father, I am not worthy to be called Your son; make me as one of Your hired servants, as long as I may but dwell in Your house.”

In your very worst case you can still come as *sinners*. Jesus “Christ came into the world to save sinners,” call this to mind and you may have hope.



### III. I must have a few words with **SEEKERS**.

Always in this congregation we have some who are seeking the Lord—would to God we had many more! It were glorious preaching if all were either seeking or had found. If it were not for the mixed multitude who neither seek nor find, our work were easy work, indeed. Some of you are seeking God today, and you are very much troubled with the fear that you cannot be saved. I will have a few words with you, to recall to mind, some commonplace truths of God which may give you hope.

First of all, some of you are troubled about the *doctrine of election*. I cannot this morning explain it to you. I believe it and receive it with joy, and you may rest assured, however much it troubles you, it is true. Though you may not like it, it is true, and remember, it is not a matter of opinion as to what you like or do not like, as to what you think or do not think, you must turn to the Bible, and if you find it there you must believe it. Listen to me. You have got an idea that some persons will be sent to hell, merely and only because it is the will of God that they should be sent there. Throw the idea overboard, because it is a very wicked one, and is not to be found in Scripture. There could not be a hell inside the man's conscience, who knew that he was wretched merely because God willed he should be, for the very essence of hell is sin, and a sense of having willfully committed it. There could not be the flames of hell if there were not this conviction on the mind of the person suffering it, "I knew my duty, but I did it not—I willfully sinned against God, and I am here not because of anything He did or did not do, but because of my own sin." If you drive that dark thought away, you may be on the road to comfort. Remember again, that whatever the doctrine of election may be or may not be, there is a free invitation in the gospel given to needy sinners, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Now you may say, “I cannot reconcile the two.” There are a great many other things that you cannot do. God knows where these two things meet though you do not, and I hope you do not intend to wait till you are a philosopher before you will be saved, because it is likely enough that while you are trying to be wise by persistently remaining a practical fool, you will find yourself in hell, where your wisdom will not be of any use to you. God commands you to trust Christ, and promises that all believers shall be saved. Leave your difficulties till you have trusted Christ, and then you will be in a capacity to understand them better than you do now. In order to understand gospel doctrine, you must believe in Christ first. What does Christ say, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Now election is the Father’s work. The Father chooses sinners; Christ makes the atonement. You must go, then, to Christ the atoning Sacrifice before you can understand the Father as the electing God. Do not persist in going to the Father first. Go to the Son as He tells you.

Once more, remember that even if your own idea of the doctrine of election were the truth, yet if it were so, you can but perish should you seek the Lord—

“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away I know,  
I must forever die.  
But if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the King have tried,  
That were to die, delightful thought,  
As sinner never died.”

Trust Christ even if you should perish, and you shall never perish if you trust in Him.

Well, if that difficulty were removed, I can suppose another, saying, “Ah, but my case is of *great sin*.” Recall this to mind, and you will have hope, namely, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” Paul says, “I am chief.” “I am chief.” Paul was the chief of sinners, and he went through the door of mercy; and now there can be none greater than the chief, and where the chief went through you can go through! If the chief of sinners has been saved; why not you? Why not you?

We heard Mr. Offord say the other day that he knew a good woman who, when the Salt-Ash Bridge was made down at Plymouth, would not go on it. She said she did not believe it was safe. She saw locomotive engines and trains go over it so that the bridge sustained hundreds of tons at a time, but she shook her head and said she wondered people were so immensely presumptuous as to cross it. When the bridge was totally clear and not an engine on it, she was asked if she would not walk on it then. Well, she did venture a little way, but she trembled all the while for fear her weight should make it fall. It could bear hundreds of tons of steel, but it could not bear her. You great sinner, it is much the same case with you. The stupendous bridge which Christ has flung across the wrath of God will bear the weight of your sin, for it has borne ten thousands of thousands across before, and will bear millions of sinners yet to the shore of their eternal rest. Call that to remembrance, and you may have hope.

“Yes,” says one, “but I believe I have committed *the unpardonable sin*.” My dear brother, I believe you have *not*, but I want you to call one thing to remembrance, and that is that the unpardonable sin is a sin which is unto death. Now a sin which is unto death means a sin which brings death on the conscience. The man who commits it never has any conscience afterwards—he is dead there. Now, you have some feeling; you have enough life to wish to be saved from sin; you have enough

life to long to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. You have *not* committed the unpardonable sin, therefore have hope. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “But,” you reply, “Oh, *I cannot repent!* My heart is so hard.” Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, and you may come to Him to get repentance, and need not bring it to Him. Come without any repentance, and ask Him to give it to you, and He will give it. Rest assured there is no fear whatever that if the soul seeks softness and tenderness, it has that softness and tenderness in a measure even now, and will have it to the fullest extent before long. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have a *general unfitness* and incapacity for being saved.” Then, dear friend, I want you to call this to remembrance, that Jesus Christ has a general fitness and a general capacity for *saving* sinners. I do not know what you need, but I do know Christ has it. I do not know the full extent of your disease, but I do know Christ is the Physician who can cure it. I do not know how hard, and stubborn, and stolid, and ignorant, and blind, and dead your nature may be, but I do know that “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.”

What you are has nothing to do with the question, except that it is the mischief to be undone. The true answer to the question of how you are to be saved lies yonder in the bleeding body of the immaculate Lamb of God! Christ has all salvation in Himself. He is Alpha, He is Omega. He does not begin to save, and leave you to perish, nor does He offer to complete what you must first begin. He is the foundation as well as the pinnacle. He commences with you as the green blade, and He will finish with you as the full corn in the ear.

O, that I had a voice like the trumpet of God that shall wake the dead at last! If I might only have it to utter one sentence, it would be this one, “Your help is found in Christ.”

As for you, there never can be found anything hopeful in your human nature; it is death itself, it is rottenness and corruption. Turn, turn your eyes away from this despairing mass of black depravity, and look to Christ! He is the Sacrifice for human guilt. His is the righteousness that covers men, and makes them acceptable before the Lord. Look to Him as you are—black, foul, guilty, leprous, condemned. Go as you are! Trust Jesus Christ to save you, and remembering this, you shall have “a hope that makes not ashamed,” which shall endure forever.

I have labored to speak comfortable words and words in season, and I have tried to speak them in homely language, too. But, O Comforter, what can we do without You? YOU must cheer our sadness. To comfort souls is God's own work! Let us conclude, then, with the words of the Savior's promise, “If I go away, I will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you forever.” And let our prayer be that He would abide with us to His own glory and to our comfort forevermore. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Lamentations 3:1-33.***

## **655 THE GREAT ITINERANT – ACTS 10:38**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 22nd, 1865,**  
**by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Who went about doing good.” — Acts 10:38**

YOU WILL OBSERVE, if you read the chapter before us, that Peter’s sermon was short and much to the point. He preached Jesus Christ to Cornelius immediately and unmistakably. He gave a very admirable sketch of the life of Jesus of which he affirmed himself to have been an eyewitness, and he brought forward, in his closing sentence, just that simple gospel which it is our joy to preach. “To Him all the prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.” This should be an instructive example to all professed ministers of the gospel. We might say less about other matters without loss, if we would say more about the Lord Jesus. If we should omit some other teaching, if there were more of a savor of the name and of the Person of Jesus Christ in our ministry, the omissions might be tolerated. It is a strange thing that men should profess to be sent of God, and yet talk about everything except the great message which they are sent to deliver! My errand as a minister is to preach Christ, and it will be of little use to me to have been clear and earnest upon other points, if I have neglected to set forth Christ crucified. To put my own views of doctrine or moral practice in the place of Jesus, is to put out the sun, and supply its place

with a farthing rush light—to take away the children's bread, and offer them a stone. We commend Peter as an example to all who preach or teach, either in the street, the sick chamber, or the house of prayer; do as Peter did; come at once to the soul of your ministry, and set forth Christ crucified in plain and simple language.

If any should plead that the subject should be adapted to the audience, we see from the narrative that there is sure to be something in the history of Christ applicable to the case before us. Peter purposely gave prominence to certain points in the history of the Master which would be most likely to enlist the sympathy of Cornelius. He says of Him, "He is Lord of all," as much as to say, "He is not Lord of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, and therefore, O Cornelius, His dominion reaches to you. He is to be worshipped and adored, and He is to become a blessing and a propitiatory sacrifice, not only to Israel's hosts, but even to the Italians; and therefore you, O centurion, may take heart." Perhaps the words of our text were uttered by Peter concerning Christ because they also would be sure to attract the notice of a man who was "A devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." He did as much as say, "You go about doing good, Cornelius. It is the very soul of your life to help the needy, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked—Jesus also went about doing good in a higher sense, and I hold Him up to you as one to be beloved by every devout and generous heart."

Other points are to be noticed in Peter's address which were evidently adapted to the case before him, but we have said enough to prove that there is something in the story of Jesus suitable to win the attention, and to gain the heart of any congregation, large or small. Only let the Holy Spirit help us to dilate upon the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and we have no need

to wander abroad for foreign themes. We can sit at the foot of the cross, and find a perpetually profitable subject there. No need to gather the sheaves of science, or the sweet flowers of prose—Christ Jesus is both our science and our poetry, and as ministers, we are complete in Him. When we come forth to preach Him, and to lift Him up, we are armed from head to foot, and rich with weapons for our spiritual warfare; though learning and art have had no hand in fashioning our armor, we need not fear that we shall meet a single foe who can withstand the terror of those celestial arms. God grant us grace in all our teachings to keep close to Jesus Christ—for His love is a theme most fit for all cases, and most sweet at all times.

The few words which we have taken for our text are an exquisite miniature of the Lord Jesus Christ. “He went about doing good.” There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master’s pencil. The portrait cannot be mistaken for anyone else. The mightiest conquerors may gaze upon its beauties, but they cannot claim that it is intended to portray their lives. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon—these went about conquering, burning, destroying, murdering; they went about not doing good. Prophets too, who professed to have been sent of God, have compassed sea and land to make proselytes, but the good which they accomplished none could see. Mohammed’s career was fraught with incalculable evil. The few good men and true, who, like Howard, have walked about the world seeking to minister to the necessities of mankind, have wept over the heavenly portrait, and sighed that they are not more like it. This is what they sought to be, and so far as they copied this portrait, this is what they were; but they fall short of the original, and are not slow to confess their shortcomings. What Peter here draws in words, God’s divine grace drew, in some measure, in lines of real life in the case of Howard and some other followers of Jesus of Nazareth; still, in the highest



and fullest sense, these words are applicable to none but the Master, for His followers could not do such good as He achieved. His is the model, and theirs the humble copy; His the classic type, and theirs the modest imitation. He did good, and good only—but the best of men, being men at the best—sow mingled seed; and if they scatter handfuls of wheat, there is here and there a grain of rye. However carefully they may select the grains, yet the cockle and the hemlock will fall from their hands as well as the good seed of the kingdom. Of the Master, and only of the Master, it is true in the fullest, and the broadest, and most unguarded sense, “He went about doing good.”

Two things this morning—first I shall want you, dear brothers, to *consider Him*; and then, in the second place, to *consider yourselves*.

**I.** The first occupation will be pleasing, as well as profitable. Let us **CONSIDER HIM**.

**1.** Consider first, *His objective*. He went about, but His travel was no listless motion, no purposeless wandering here and there—“He went about *doing good*.” O man of God, have a purpose, and devote your whole life to it! Be not an arrow shot at random, as in child’s play, but choose your target, and swift as the bullet whizzes to the mark, so fly onwards towards the great aim and objective of your life. Christ’s objective is described in these words, “doing good.” Of this, we may say that this was His *eternal purpose*. Long before He took upon Himself the nature of man, or even before man was formed of the dust of the earth, the heart of Jesus Christ was set upon doing good. In the eternal council in which the sacred Three entered into stipulations of the everlasting covenant, Christ Jesus became the Surety of that covenant in order that He might do good—good in the highest sense—good in snatching His people from the misery which sin would bring upon them, and good in manifesting the glorious attributes of God in a

splendor which could not otherwise have surrounded them. His delights of old were with the sons of men, because they afforded Him an opportunity, such as He could find nowhere else, of doing good. He did good, it is true, among the angels, for the heavenly harps owe all their music to His presence. Among the devils, there was no room for positive good; they were given over to evil, but even there restraining goodness found work for itself in binding them down in iron bands, lest their mischief should grow too rampant. On earth, however, was the widest scope and amplest room for goodness in its largest sense; not merely the goodness which restrains evil, and the goodness which rewards virtue, but that greater goodness which descends to sin-stricken mortals, and lifts them up from the dunghill of their miserable degradation to set them upon the throne of glory. It was the eternal purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the lamps of heaven were kindled, or stars began to glitter in the vault of night, that He would do good.

This was His *practical objective*, when He made His ever-memorable descent from the throne of His splendor to the manger of His poverty. Angels might well sing at Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” for Jesus Christ came not condemning the world, but doing good. His presence in the manger did good, as it cheered both rich magi and poor shepherd, both learned and illiterate, both Simeon and Anna, with the knowledge that God had come down to men. His childhood afterwards did good, for though it was so unobtrusive and obscure that a few words suffice to set it forth, yet He has become the very mirror of childhood’s dutiful obedience to this day. His adult life was one practical carrying-out of the solitary objective which brought Him from the throne of glory to the abodes of sinful men—He “went about doing good.” Nor was this merely His purpose and the objective of His errand, but His *official prerogative*. He

received the name of Jesus at His birth, “For He shall save His people from their sins.” He was named “Christ,” because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, and He was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, and to open the prisons to them who were bound. Jesus Christ is the title which bespeaks One whose office it is to do good. Mention any name you please, which belongs to the Savior, and you will see that it is incumbent upon Him, *ex officio*, to go about doing good.

Is He a Shepherd? He must do good to His sheep. Is He a Husband? He must love His Church, and give Himself for her, that He may cleanse and perfect her. Is He a friend? He “sticks closer than a brother,” and does good. Is He “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”? It is not to do damage or mischief to innocence and weakness, but that, strong as a lion when he tears his prey, He may rend in pieces the foe of truth and goodness. Is he a Lamb? Here His goodness shows itself most completely, for He lays down His life, that His Israel may go free when the destroying angel smites Egypt. Everywhere it was His peculiar prerogative, and His special business, to go about doing good. But more, it was not only His intention and the objective of His errand, and His prerogative, but *His actual performance*. He did good in all senses. Jesus Christ worked physical benefit among the sons of men. How many blind eyes first saw the light through the touch of His fingers! How many silent ears heard the charming voice of affection after He had said, “Be open”! Even the gates of death were no barrier to the errands of His goodness; the widow at the gate of Nain felt her heart leap within her for joy when her son was restored; and Mary and Martha were glad when Lazarus came forth from his grave. Jesus Christ did good physically. We have thought that our Lord did this, not merely to show His power and universality of His benevolence, and to teach spiritual truth by acted parables, but also to say to us in these days, “Followers of Jesus,

do good in all sorts of ways. You may think it is your special calling to feed souls, but remember that your Master broke loaves and fishes to hungry bodies. You may deem it your chief objective to instruct the ignorant, but remember that He healed the sick. You may make it your chief joy to pray for the healing of sick spirits, but remember that He rescued many bodies from incurable disease.”

As much as lies in us, let us do good unto all men, and good of all kinds, too, though it is especially to the household of faith, and especially in a spiritual sense. Let no act of mercy seem beneath him who is a follower of the Man who went about doing good. There is a spirit springing up among us which is very dangerous, though it wears the garb of excessive spirituality. It is impractical and unchristlike—a spirit which talks in this fashion—“The sons of men tried to improve the world, and make it better, but as for Enoch, the man of God, he knew that the world was so bad that it was of no use to attempt to better it, and therefore, he left it alone, and walked with God.” It may be well, they say, for such carnalminded Christians as some of us to try and improve society, and to give a better tone to morals, but these dear spiritual brethren are so taken up with divine things, and so assured that the mission is of a supercelestial character, that they will have nothing to do with blessing mankind, being quite sufficiently occupied with blessing themselves and one another. I pray God that we may never fall into the impractical speculations and separations of certain brethren whose superior sanctity they must allow us to suspect. The large-heartedness of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most glorious traits in His character. He scattered good of all sorts on all sides. Let us, if we profess to be His followers, never be straitened even by pretended spirituality. Do good “as *much* as lies in you,” to the utmost extent of your power, and let that be of every sort. It strikes me that the Lord Jesus also did

much *moral good*. Where He did not save spiritually, yet He elevated. I am not sure that that poor adulteress was ever truly converted, and yet I know that He said, “Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.” And I can well believe that in this respect, at least, she would sin no more. I do not know that the Pharisees ever became followers of the Man of Nazareth, and yet I cannot conceive that they could have listened to His stern rebukes against their hypocrisy without being in some measure humbled, if not enlightened. Or if *they* were not better, at any rate, their professions would not be so readily allowed; society would receive, as it were, a tonic from those sharp and bitter words of the Master, and become too strong and masculine to receive any longer the lofty boastings of those mere pretenders.

Jesus Christ, when He sat down on the mount, did not deliver a spiritual sermon of the style commonly classed under that head. That Sermon on the Mount is, for the most part, morality—good high, heavenly morality—higher than any teacher ever reached before; but there is very little in it about justification by faith, or concerning atonement, very little about the doctrine of election, the work of the Holy Spirit, or final perseverance. The fact is the Master was doing moral as well as spiritual good; and coming among a degraded people who had set darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, He thought it a part of His vocation to preach to them truth on that subject as well as upon the higher themes concerning His advent and His salvation. Dear friends, this admonishes us to seek the moral good of the people among whom we dwell. The Christian minister must not lay aside his ministry to become the mere moralist lecturer, but he may and should lecture upon morals—and he can say some things in lectures which he could not say in sermons. Let him, by all means, occasionally leave the pulpit for the platform, if he can do service to society; let him do good in every possible shape

and way. I think that it is the Christian minister's place not simply to preach the high and glorious doctrine of the cross, but also to deal with the current sins of mankind as did the prophets of old—and to teach those virtues most needed in the state—as did men God sent in the ages which are past. Jesus Christ went about doing good, we say, of a moral kind as well as of a spiritual order, but still the Savior's great good was *spiritual*. This was the great end that He was driving at—the bringing out of a people prepared to receive Himself and His salvation—He came preaching divine grace and peace. His great objective was the spiritual emancipation of the souls of men in bondage. Beloved, how He sought after this! What tears and cries went up to God from the mountain's bleak summit! With what earnest intercession did He plead with men when He addressed them concerning repentance and faith! "Woe unto you, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, Chorazin!" These were not words spoken by One who had a tearless eye. "Woe unto you, Capernaum!" was not the desolating curse of One who had a hard, unsympathetic heart. The Savior, when He wept over Jerusalem, was only doing once before men what He did all His life before God. He wept over sinners; He longed for their salvation! "Never man spoke like that Man." Having the highest truth, He spoke it after the highest fashion; never the ostentation of eloquence, never the affectation of oratory—but always the earnest, still, small pleading voice which "does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He went about in His daily preaching instructing the people because He found them as sheep without a shepherd, and therefore, "He taught them many things."

Physical, moral, spiritual good, good of all sorts the Savior did—and while I close this point as to His objective of life, let me say that He did something more than all this—He worked enduring good which abides with us now. The good that holy

men do is imperishable. The Scripture says, “Their works do follow them,” but not to the grave—their works ascend upward. If our works followed our bodies, they would rot in the tomb, but they follow our souls, and therefore mount up to immortality. Look upon the world now and see whether Jesus Christ is not still in Spirit going about doing good. He has gone up to glory, but the Spirit of His life and of His teaching is still among us. And what is His religion doing? Ask of our sires, and they will tell you how this land was translated from a region of savages into the abode of peace and joy. Look yourselves, in your own day, to the far off islands of the south, and see how they have been transformed from dens of the wild blood-loving cannibals into abodes of civilized men. Jesus Christ’s gospel flies like an angel through the midst of heaven proclaiming good news to men, and wherever its foot rests but for an hour, it transforms the desert into an Eden, and makes the wilderness blossom as the rose! May the Savior help us to live, so that when we die we may have sown some seeds which shall blossom over our tomb.

Thus, we have given an outline of the Savior’s doing good. May we add this sentence as a comfort to any here who are seeking Jesus. If it were His eternal purpose and His life’s mission to do good, and He went about to find out the objects of it, why should He not do good to you? If He healed the blind, if He gave spiritual sight, why should He not give it *to you*? O may the desire be breathed by you, poor seeking soul, breathed solemnly, but hopefully to Him—“O You, who in the days of Your flesh did take pity upon misery and wretchedness in every shape, take pity upon me! Save me with Your great salvation!” Rest assured, beloved hearer, that prayer will not go up to heaven in vain! His ears are still open to hear the cry of woe, and His hands are still ready to give the healing touch, and the

voice to say, “I will, be you clean.” May He do good in you this morning!

2. A short time may be profitably spent in considering the mode in which this objective was accomplished. We are told that He “*went about doing good*,” which seems to suggest several points. First of all, He did the good *personally*. He “went about doing good.” He might, if He had chosen, have selected His place, and having seated Himself, He might have sent out His apostles as ambassadors to do good in His place. But you will recollect that when He sent them out, it was not that they might be proxies, but that they might be heralds; He sent them two and two unto every place where He Himself would go. They were to be to Him what John the Baptist had been at His first coming. Jesus Christ entered the field of labor in person. It is remarkable how the evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger, that He visited the bedside of those sick with fever, and in cases where He was asked to speak the word only at a distance, He did not usually comply with such a request, but went Himself to the sick bed, and there personally worked the cure. A lesson to us if we would do good—do it ourselves. There are some things which we cannot do ourselves. We cannot remain among our families in England, for instance, and preach the gospel in Hindustan. We cannot be engaged this morning in listening to the Word, and at the same time visiting the lodging house or den of iniquity in some back street. There are some works of mercy which are best performed by others—but we can make these more personal by looking after the worker, and taking a deeper interest in him, and by attending him with our prayers. I wish that much more benevolence were performed by men themselves. I do not care to speak against societies! But it is such an odd thing that if I have 21 shillings to give away, I cannot give them to a deserving family myself, but I must make



it into about 15 shillings before it goes at all by paying it into a royal something or other society! And then it proceeds by a roundabout method, and at last is delivered to the poor by a mere hand without a soul, and it is received by the poor, not as a gift of charity, but rather as a contribution from an unknown something with a secretary, which needs a place in which to drop its funds.

Why should you not go and give away the 21 shillings yourself, lovingly and tenderly? It will be better than letting somebody else pare it down to 15 and give it away coldly and officially. So much depends upon the way of doing good. The look, the word, the prayer, the tear will often be more valuable to the widow than that half-crown which you have given her. I heard a poor person once say, “Sir, I went to so-and-so for help, and he refused me; but I would sooner be refused by him than I would have money given to me by so-and-so,” mentioning another who gave it with a sort of, “Well, you know I do not approve of giving anything to such as you are, but here it is—you must have it I suppose, so be off with you.” Give your alms away yourselves, and you will learn, by so doing, it will enable you to exercise Christian virtues. You will win a joy which it were not worthwhile to lose, and you will confer, in addition to the benevolence that you bestow, a blessing which cannot be conferred by the person who is your substitute. He went about doing good. He did it Himself. Oh, some of you, preach yourselves, I pray you! Talk to the Sunday school children yourselves! Give away tracts—that is well enough if you cannot speak—but do try and talk yourselves. The influence of that hand laid upon your friend’s shoulder, those eyes of yours looking into his eyes as you say, “Friend, I wish you were converted, my soul longs for your salvation”—there is more in that influence than in a whole library of tracts! Seek souls yourselves! Fish with your own hooks; you cannot help being

successful if you imitate your Master, and do good yourselves in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Savior not only “went about doing good” Personally, but *His very presence did good*. The presence of the Savior is in itself a good, apart from the blessings which He bestowed. At the sight of Him, courage revived, drooping faith grew strong, hope brushed a tear from her eye and smiled. The sight of Jesus Christ, as once it calmed the waves and hushed the winds, did so a thousand times in men souls. Even devils, when they saw Him, cried out and trembled. Sinners wept at the sight of His pitying goodness. The woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment felt that the only fit place to break it was near to Him. His presence made her sacred action yet more sweet. What cannot men do when Christ is there? And, O beloved, if we are anything like our Master, our presence will be of some value. There are some of my brethren, when I see them, I feel strong. You go into a little prayer meeting, and numbers are not there; but such a saint is there, and you feel, “Well, if he is here, here is a prayer meeting at once.” You have work to do; it is very hard and toilsome, and you cannot prosper in it. But a brother drops into your little Sunday school, or into your class, and looks at it, and you feel, “Well, if I have that man’s encouragement, I can go on again.” Therefore, be careful to give your presence as much as you can to every good work, and do not isolate yourself from those actually engaged in labors of love. Does not our Lord’s going about doing good set forth His incessant activity? He did not only the good which was round about Him, which came close to hand—He did not only the good which was brought to Him as when men were brought on their beds and laid at His feet—He “went about.” He could not be satisfied to be still. Throughout the whole land of Judea, from Dan to Beersheba, He trod its weary acres. There was scarcely a village or a hamlet which had not been

gladdened by the sight of Him. Even Jericho, accursed of old, had been blessed by His presence, and a great sinner had been made a great saint. He went everywhere casting salt into the bitter waters, and sowing with sunshine the abodes of sadness. He was always active in God's service!

Oh, the creeping, crawling manner in which some people serve the Lord. The very way in which some people mumble through religious exercises is enough to make one sick at heart, to think that the solemn offices of religion should be entrusted to such inanimate beings! If God of old said of Laodicea that He would spew that church out of His mouth, what will He do with those professors in modern times who are the very pink of propriety, but who were never touched with fire from heaven, and know not what *the* word “*zeal*” means? Our Master was here and there, and everywhere! Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be not weary in doing well, but be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

Does not the text also imply that Jesus Christ *went out of His way to do good*? “He went *about* doing good.” There were short cuts which He would not take, because there were persons dwelling in the roundabout way who must be met with. “He needed to go through Samaria.” It is said that that city lay in the straightest way to Jerusalem. So it was, but it was not the right way, because the Samaritans so hated those whose faces were towards Jerusalem, that they maltreated them whenever they could. Yet the Master did not care for perils of waylaying enemies; He did not select the smoothest or the safest road, but He selected that in which there was a woman to whom He could do good. He sits down on the well. I know it was not merely weariness that made Him sit there; and when He said, “I thirst: give Me to drink,” it was not merely that He was thirsty; He had another weariness—He was patient over that woman's sin, and longed to reveal Himself to her! He had

another thirst—He did not mean merely, “Give me water out of that well,” when He said, “Give me to drink,” He meant, “Give Me your heart’s love, My soul pants for it; I want to see you—a poor adulterous sinner—saved from sin.” How else do we understand the words which He said to His disciples, when they wondered that He spoke with the woman? He said, “I have meat to eat that you know not of, for it is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him Who sent Me.” He had received meat and drink in seeing that woman leave her water pot, and go away to tell her fellow sinners, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?” He went round about after the objectives of His gracious desires. So must the Christian. You must not be content to do good in the regular circle of your movements—that is so far so good, but go beyond your old line! Break through the bounds of propriety every now and then, and do an odd thing.

I believe that sometimes these odd measures achieve more than regular methods. That was a quaint tactic of those who broke up the roof to let down a palsied man, that Jesus might heal him. There has been a good deal said about that roof. According to some people, it was not a roof at all, but a sort of awning! But this morning we will stick to our old version which tells us, “They broke up the *tiling*.” This must have made it a very bad predicament for those down below, but I dare say those up top argued—“ Well, the Savior is there, and if anybody shall be hurt by a tile or two, He can easily heal them. Anyhow we will get this man before Him, for this is the case in which we feel most concerned.” Ah, dear friends, many people are so particular about making a little dust or breaking up a few tiles, but our mind is, “never care about that,” there will be time to clean the repair after souls are saved, and for so great an end as salvation, we may neglect some few niceties and formalities, and be most of all vehemently desirous that we may do good.

We have not quite done with the text yet. It means too that *Jesus Christ went far in doing good*. The district of Palestine was not very large, but you will observe that He went to the limit of it. He was, as it were, the bishop of the Holy Land, and He never went out of the diocese, for He said He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He went to the outer limits of it; He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. If He might not go over the mark, yet He will go up to the edge. So if there should happen to be any limit to your doing good in any particular place, at least go to the end of the limit. However, I rather like Rowland Hill's thought—when he was blamed for preaching out of his parish, he claimed that he never did so, for the whole world was his parish. Make the *world* the sphere of your occupation, according to the parable, "the field is the world." I admire the Lord's going about not simply for the miles He traveled, but for the space of character over which He passed. He "went about." It is nothing amazing that He went as far as Tyre and Sidon, but it is much that He went as far as publicans and sinners! I do not wonder that He went from Dan to Beersheba, but I have wondered often that He went so far as to save harlots by His grace. We may in this sense go about doing good without traveling across the sea. A minister once announced to his congregation one Sunday morning, "I am going on a mission to the heathen." Now, he had not told his deacons about it, and they looked at one another. The good people in the congregation, some of them, began to take out their pocket handkerchiefs. They thought their minister was going to leave them—he was so useful and necessary to them that they felt sad at the bare idea of losing him. "But" he added, "I shall not be out of town." So you may go on a mission to the heathen without going out of this huge town of ours.

You might almost preach to every sort of literal heathen within the bounds of London—to Parthians, Medes, and

Elamites—and the dwellers of Mesopotamia. There are men of every color, speaking every language under heaven, now living in London; and if you want to convert Muslims, Turks, Chinese, men from Bengal, Java, or Borneo, you may find them all here. There are always representatives of every nation close at our door. If you want men who have gone far in sin, great foreigners in that respect, you certainly need not leave London for that; you shall find men and women rotten with sin, and reeking in the nostrils of God with their abominations. You may go about doing good, and your railway ticket need not cost you one farthing! No doubt Christ's *perseverance* is intended in our text, for when rejected in one place, He goes to another. If one will not hear, another will. The *unity* of His purpose is also hinted at. He does not go about with two aims, but this one absorbs all His heart—"doing good." And the *success*, too, of His purpose is here intended. He went about, and not only *tried* to do good, but He did it—He left the world better than He found it when He ascended to His Father God.

3. One moment concerning the *motive* of Christ's doing good. It is not far to seek. *He did good partly because He could not help it.* It was His nature to do good. He was all goodness, and as the clouds which are full of rain empty themselves upon the earth, even so must He. You will have observed that all the good things which God has made are diffusive. There is light—you cannot confine light within narrow limits. Suppose we were to grow so bigoted and conceited as to conceive that *we* had all the light in the world inside this Tabernacle. We might have iron shutters made to keep the light in—yet it is very probable that the light would not agree with our bigotry, and would not come in at all—but leave us in the dark for wanting to confine it. With splendid mirrors, Turkish carpets, jewelry, fine pictures, and rare statuary, you may court the light to come into palatial halls. It comes, it is true, but as it enters it whispers, "And I

passed through the iron grating of a prison, just now. I shone upon the poor cottager beneath the rude thatched roof, I streamed through the window out of which half the glass was gone, and gleamed as cheerily and willingly upon the rags of poverty as in these marble halls.” You cannot clip the wings of the morning, or monopolize the golden rays of the sun. What a space the light has traversed doing good! Millions of miles it has come streaming from the sun, and yet further from yonder fixed star. O Light! Why could you not be contented with your own sphere? Why journey so far from home? Missionary rays come to us from so vast a distance that they must have been hundreds of years in reaching us, and yet their mission is not over, for they flash on to yet remoter worlds. So with the air—as far as the world is concerned, the air will throw itself down the shaft of the deepest coal pit, climb the loftiest Alp—and although men madly strive to shut it out—it will thrust itself into the fever lair, and cool the brow of cholera.

So with water; here it comes dropping from every inch of the cloudy sky, flooding the streets, flushing the foul sewers, and soaking into the dry soil. Everywhere it will come, for water claims to have its influence felt everywhere. Fire, too! Who can bind its giant hands? The King cannot claim it as a royal prerequisite. Among those few sticks which the widow woman with the red cloak has been gathering in the woods, it burns as readily as in Her Majesty’s palace. It is the nature of Jesus to diffuse Himself—it is His life to do good. His grand motive, no doubt, is *the display of the glorious attributes of God*. He went about doing good in order that Jehovah might be revealed in His splendor to the eyes of adoring men. He is the manifestation of Godhead. He is the express image of His Father’s Person. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” And though heaven, and earth, and sky, and sun, and stars, all show forth something of the goodness of God, yet the

life of Jesus is the fullest and clearest manifestation of the beneficence of Deity that will ever be accorded to the sons of men. This is an objective worthy of God, to manifest Himself, and such an objective Christ set before Him when He came to do good among the sons of men.

I have not said enough about the Savior, but still as much as time allows us, and I will close this point with this one thing—if Jesus Christ went about doing good, and if His motive was simply God’s glory—poor troubled sinner—cannot He glorify God *in you*? You need pardon—you will be an illustrious instance of God’s grace if He should ever save you! Have hope. If Jesus Christ goes about, you are not too far off. If He looks upon the most forlorn, you are not in too desperate a plight. Cry to Him when your spirit is overwhelmed! Look to the Rock that is higher than you! “From the ends of the earth have I cried unto You, O God, and You heard me.” May it be your joy today to find Him your friend, who “went about doing good.”

**II.** We were in the second place to **CONSIDER OURSELVES**. This is the application of the subject.

*Consider ourselves then as to the past*, with sorrow and shamefacedness. Have we gone about doing good? I fear there are some here who never did any spiritual good! The tree is corrupt, and it cannot bring forth good fruit. The fountain is bitter, and it cannot yield sweet water. You must be born-again before you can go about doing good. While your nature is as father Adam left it, good cannot come from you. “There is none who does good, no not one.” How clearly this is true in some persons, as proved by their very profession. The profession of some men is one in which they cannot hope to do good. There are some in all callings who either do positive harm, or at any rate, cannot imagine that they are doing any good. Let them repent. “Every tree that brings not forth good



fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” God grant that neither our character nor our vocation may stand in the way of our doing good! But you who have new hearts and rights spirits, and are saved by faith in the precious blood of Jesus, have you done all the good you could? *I dare not say yes—I wish I could dare it!* No, Master, there must have been many times when I might have served You when I have not done it. I have been an unprofitable servant. I have not done what was my duty to have done. Ah, some of you have missed a world of joy in having done so little good. You have not given, therefore, you are not increased. You never gave much to others, and so they have not given back to you full measure, pressed down, and running over. You have not borne the burdens of others, and so your own burden has become heavy and intolerable. Christians, in looking back upon the past, must you not drop tears of regret? And do you not bless that preserving love which still follows you? Yes, which will never let you go! And in spite of your barrenness and unfruitfulness, it will not cease to work upon you till it has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light—who day without night serve God in His Temple!

As to the *future*. The old question comes up, if any man today says, “I am resolved to go about doing good”—is he able to do it? And again, the reply comes—we must first be good, or else we cannot do good. The only way to be good is to seek to the Good One, the Good Master! If you have a new heart and a right spirit, then go your way and serve Him; but if not, pause awhile. Unto the wicked, God says, “What have you to do to declare My statutes?” He will have clean-handed men to do His work. Wash first in the bronze laver if you would be a priest. God will not have men for His servants who would defile the sacred place. “Be you clean who bear the vessels of the Lord.” God give us to rest implicitly upon the Lord Jesus

Christ by a living faith, and so to be cleansed in His precious blood; and then we may resolve to go forth and live for Him. Have we any work to do now that we can set about at once? If we have, whatever our hands find to do, let us do it. Let us not be asking for greater abilities than we have. If we can get them, let us do so—but meanwhile let us use what we have. Go, housewife, to your house, and from the lowest chamber to the top, go about doing good—here is range enough for you! Go, teacher, to your little school, and among those boys or girls, let your example imitate Christ, and there is range enough for you! Go, worker, to your shop, and among your fellow workmen; let fall here and there a word for Christ! Above all, let your example shine, and there is work for you. You domestic servants, the kitchen is sphere enough for you. You shall go about doing good from the dresser to the fireplace, and you shall have width enough and breadth enough to make it a kingdom consecrated to God!

Without leaving your position, any one of you—without giving up the plow, or the cobbler's lap stone, or the needle, or the plane, or the saw, *any* business—without any of you good sisters wanting to be nuns, or any of us putting on the cloth, and becoming monks—in our own calling, let us go about doing good! The best preparation for it will be to renew our dedication to Christ, be much in earnest prayer, seek the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and then go forth in our Master's strength with this as our resolve—that as imitators of Jesus Christ it shall be said of us, "He went about doing good." May God add His blessing for the Savior's sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Acts 10.***

## **656 PRECEDING GRACE – GAL. 1:15-16**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me.” — Galatians 1:15-16**

YOU ALL KNOW the story of the apostle Paul; he had been a persecutor, and went armed with letters to Damascus to hail men and women, and drag them to prison. On the road there he saw an exceedingly bright light—brighter than the brightness of the sun—and a voice spoke out of heaven to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” By this miraculous interposition he was converted—three days he spent in darkness; but when Ananias came to tell him of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there fell from his eyes, as it were, scales. He was baptized, became the mightiest of all Christian teachers, and could truly say that he was, “Not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles.”

Paul’s conversion is generally considered so very remarkable for its suddenness and distinctness, and truly it is; yet, at the same time, it is no exception to the general rule of conversions, but is rather a type, or model, or pattern of the way in which God shows forth His long-suffering to them who are led to believe on Him. It appears from my text, however, that there is another part of Paul’s history which deserves our attention quite as much as the suddenness of his conversion,

namely, the fact that although he was suddenly converted, yet God had had thoughts of mercy towards him from his very birth. God did not begin to work with him when he was on the road to Damascus. That was not the first occasion on which eyes of love had darted upon this chief of sinners, but Paul declares that God had separated him and set him apart, even from his mother's womb, that he might, by-and-by, be called by grace, and have Jesus Christ revealed in him.

I selected this text, not so much for its own sake, as to give me an opportunity for saying a little this evening upon a doctrine not often touched upon, namely, that of **PRECEDING GRACE**, or the grace which comes before regeneration and conversion. I think we sometimes overlook it. We do not attach enough importance to the grace of God in its dealings with men before He actually brings them to Himself. Paul says that God had designs of love towards him, even before He had called him out of the dead world into spiritual life.

**I. To begin, then, let us talk for a little while upon THE PURPOSE OF GOD PRECEDING SAVING GRACE, AS IT MAY CLEARLY BE SEEN DEVELOPING ITSELF IN HUMAN HISTORY.**

You generally judge what a man's purpose is by his actions. If you saw a man very carefully making molds in the sand, and then watched him take several pieces of iron and melt them down, and if you further noticed him pouring the melted iron into the molds, you might not know precisely what class of machine he was making, but you would very justly conclude that he was making some part of an engine or other machinery. Perhaps you might guess a beam, or a lever, or a crank, or a wheel—and according to what you saw the molds in the sand to be, you would form your idea of what the man was intending to make. Now, when I look at the life of a man, even before conversion, I think I can discover something of God's molding

and fashioning in him even before regenerating grace comes into his heart. Let me give you an illustration of my course of thought. When God created man—we are told in the book of Genesis—He made him “out of the dust of the earth.” Mark him beneath his Maker’s hand, the framework of a man, the tabernacle for an immortal soul—a man made of clay, fully made I suppose, and perfect in all respects excepting one, and that soon followed—for after God had formed him out of the dust, then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. Now, it strikes me that during the early part of the history of the people whom God means to save, though they have not received into their hearts any spiritual life, nor experienced any of the work of regeneration, yet their life before conversion is really a working of them in the clay.

Let us endeavor to bring this out more distinctly. Can you not perceive God’s purpose in the apostle Paul when you think of the *singular gifts with which he was endowed*? Here was a man, a rhetorician, so noble that there are in his works, passages of eloquence not to be equaled, much less excelled, by Demosthenes and Cicero. As a logician his arguments are most conclusive as well as profound. Never had man such eagle eyes to pierce into the depths of a matter; never had man such eagle wings to mount up into its sublimities. He argues out questions so difficult to understand, that at all times they have been the battlegrounds of controversies, and yet he seems to perceive them clearly, and distinctly, and to unfold and expound them, with a precision of language not to be misunderstood. All apostles of Jesus Christ put together are not equal to Paul in the way of teaching. Truly he might have said of them all, “You are but as children compared with me.” Peter dashes, and dashes gloriously against the adversary, but Peter cannot build up, nor instruct like the great apostle of the Gentiles. He has to

say of Paul's writings, that they, "Contain some things hard to be understood." Peter can confirm, but scarcely can he understand Paul—for where intellect is concerned, Paul is far, far above him. Paul seems to have been endowed by God with one of the most intelligent brains that ever filled human cranium, and to have been gifted with an intellect, which towered far above anything that we find elsewhere. Had Paul been merely a natural man, I do not doubt but what he would take the place either of Milton among the poets or of Bacon among the philosophers. He was, in deed and in truth, a mastermind.

Now, when I see such a man as this cast by God in the mold of nature, I ask myself—"What is God's purpose? What is He doing here?" As every man has a purpose, so also has God, and I think I see in all this that God foreknew that such a man was necessary to be raised up as a vessel, through whom He might convey to the world the hidden treasures of the gospel. Such a man was needed so that God might speak His great things by him. You will say, probably, that God reveals great things by fools. I beg your pardon. God did once permit an ass to speak, but it was a very small thing that he said, for any ass might readily have said it. Whenever there is a wise thing to be said, a wise man is always chosen to say it. Look the whole Bible through, and you will find that the revelation is always congruous to the person to whom it is given. You do not find Ezekiel blessed with a revelation like that of Isaiah. Ezekiel is all imagination; therefore, he must soar on the eagle's wings. Isaiah is all affection and boldness, and therefore, he must speak with evangelical fullness. God does not give Nahum's revelation to the herdsman Amos—the herdsman Amos cannot speak like Nahum, nor can Nahum speak like Amos. Each man is after his own order, and a man of this masterly order of mind, like the apostle Paul, must have been created, it

seems to me, for no other end, than to be the appropriate means of revealing to us the fullness and the blessing of the gospel of peace!

Mark, again, *the apostle's education*. Paul was a Jew, not half Greek and half Jew, but a pure Jew of the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of the Hebrews, speaking the Jews' native tongue, and not a stranger to the ancient speech of Israel. There was nothing in the traditions of the Jews which Paul did not know and understand. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. The best master of the age is selected to be the master of the hopeful young scholar, and the school in which he is placed must be a rabbinical one. Now, just observe in this the purpose of God. Paul's life-long struggle was to be with Jewish superstition. In Iconium, in Lystra, in Derbe, in Athens, in Corinth, in Rome, he must always be confronting the Judaizing spirit; and it was well that he should know all about it—that he should be well schooled in it. And it does strike me that God separated him from his mother's womb on purpose, that he might go forth to proclaim the gospel instead of law, and shut the mouths of those who were constantly abiding by the traditions of the fathers, instead of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All this, remember, was going on while as yet he was unconverted, though he was even then, as we see, being prepared for his work.

Then observe *the spiritual struggles through which Paul passed*. I take it that mental struggles are often a more important part of education than what a man learns from his schoolmaster. What is learned here in my heart is often of more use to me, than what can be put into my head by another. Paul seems to have had a mind bent upon carrying out what he believed to be right. To serve God appears to have been the great ambition, the one objective of the apostle's life. Even when he was a persecutor, he says he thought he was doing God service. He was no seeker

after wealth; never in his whole lifetime was Paul a Mammonite. He was no mere seeker after learning—never; he was learned, but it was all held and used subject to what he deemed far more highly, the indwelling grace of God. Even before he knew Christ he had a sort of religion, and an attachment, and an earnest attachment, too, to the God of his fathers, though it was zeal not according to knowledge. He had his inward fights, and fears, and struggles, and difficulties, and all these were educating him to come out and talk to his fellow sinners, and lead them up out of the darkness of Judaism into the light of Christianity.

And then, what I like in Paul, and that which leads me to see the purpose of God in him, is *the singular formation of his mind*. Even as a sinner, Paul was great. He was “the chief of sinners,” just as he afterwards became, “not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles.” There are some of us who are such little men, that the world will never see us; the old proverb about the chips in porridge giving one pleasure either way, might apply to a great many people, but never to Paul. If there was anything to be done, Paul would do it—yes, and if it came to the stoning of Stephen, he says he gave his vote against him, and though he was not one of the actual executioners, yet we are told that “The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” He would do all that was to be done, and was a thoroughgoing man everywhere. Believing a thing to be right, Paul never consulted with flesh and blood, but girded up his loins, and worked with all the powers of his being, and that was no mean force, as his enemies felt to their cost. Why, as I see him riding to Damascus, I picture him with his eyes flashing with fanatic hate against the disciples of the Man whom he thought to be an impostor, and his heart beat high with the determination to crush the followers of the Nazarene. He is a man all energy, and all determination, and when he is



converted, he is only lifted into a higher life, but unchanged as to temperament, nature, and force of character. He seems to have been naturally constituted a thorough-going, thorough-hearted man, in order that when grace did come to him, he might be just as earnest, just as dauntless, and fearless, in the defense of what he believed to be right. Yes and, such a man, was needed to lead the vanguard in the great crusade against the god of this world. No other could have stood forward as Paul did, for no other had the same firmness, boldness, and decision that he possessed.

“But,” I hear someone say, “Was not Peter as bold?” Yes, he was; but Peter, you remember, always had the failing of being just where he ought not to be when he was needed. Peter was unstable to the very last, I think; certainly, in Paul’s day, Paul had to withstand him. He was a great and good man, but not fitted to be the foremost. Perhaps you say, “But there is John—would not John do?” No; we cannot speak in too high terms of John, but John is too full of affection. John is the plane to smooth the timber, but not the axe to cut it down. John is too gentle, too meek; he is the Phillip Melancthon, but Paul must be the Luther and Calvin rolled into one. Such a man was needed, and I say that from his very birth, God was fitting him for this position; and before he was converted, preceding grace was engaged fashioning, molding, and preparing the man in order that by-and-by, there might be put into his nostrils the breath of life.

Now what is the drift of all this? A practical one; and to show you what it is, we will linger a minute here before we go on to anything else. Some of the good fathers among us are mourning very bitterly just now over their sons. Your children have not turned out as you wish they would; they are getting skeptical, some of them, and they are also falling into sin. Well, dear friends, it is yours to mourn; it is enough to make you

weep bitterly; but let me whisper a word into your ears. Do not sorrow as those who are without hope, for God may have very great designs to be answered, even by these very young men, who seem to be running so altogether in the wrong direction. I do not think I could go so far as John Bunyan did, when he said he was sure God would have some eminent saints in the next generation, because the young men in his day were such gross sinners, that he thought they would make fine saints. And when the Lord came and saved them, by His mercy, they would love Him much, because they had had so much forgiven. I can hardly say as much as that, but I do believe that sometimes, in the inscrutable wisdom of God—when some of those who have been skeptical come to see the truth—they are the very best men who could possibly be found, to do battle against the enemy. Some of those who have fallen into error, after having passed through it, and happily come up through its deep ditch, are just the men to stand and warn others against it. I cannot conceive that Luther would ever have been so mighty a preacher of the faith if he had not, himself, struggled up and down Pilate's staircase on his knees when trying to get to heaven by his penances, and his good works. O, let us have hope! We do not know but that God may be intending to call them and bless them! Who can tell, there may be a young man here tonight, who will one day be the herald of the cross in China, in Hindustan, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea!

Remember John Williams wishing to keep an appointment with another young man who committed a certain sin. He wanted to know what time it was, and so stepped into Moorefield's Chapel; someone saw him, and he did not want to leave, and the word, preached by Mr. Timothy East who still survives among us, fell on his ears, and the young sinner was made a saint! And you all know how he afterwards perished as a martyr on the shores of Erromanga. Why, may there not be

another such a case tonight? There may be some young man here who has been receiving a first class education, he has no idea what for; he has been learning a multitude of things, perhaps a great deal which it would be much better if he did not know, but the Lord is meaning to make something of him. I do not know where you are, young man, but O, I wish I could fire you tonight with a high ambition to serve God! What is the good of my being made at all if I do not serve my Maker? What is the use of my being here, if I do not bring any glory to Him who put me and keeps me here? Why, I had better have been a piece of rotten dung strewn upon the field, and bringing forth something for the farmer's use, than to have been a mere consumer of bread and meat, and to have breathed the air and lived upon God's bounty, and yet to have done nothing for Him! O young man, if such an army of you as we have tonight, could all be led by divine grace to say with the apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," why, there would be hope for Old England yet! We would yet fling Popery back to the seven hills from where it came. Oh that God would grant us this blessing; but if He should not be pleased to call all of us by His grace, yet may some here live to prove that they were separated from their mother's womb to God's work, and set apart that they might have the Son of God revealed in them, and might proclaim His gospel with power! We will now leave this point, but shall continue the same subject in another form.

**II.** You would, perhaps, say that all I have talked about as yet has been providence rather than grace. Very likely, but I think that providence and grace are very near akin; at any rate, if providence is the wheel, grace is the hand which turns and guides it. But I am now about to speak of **GRACE PRECEDING CALLING IN ANOTHER SENSE.**

It strikes me that it is impossible to say, concerning the elect, when the grace of God begins to deal with them. You can tell when the quickening grace comes, but not when the grace, itself, comes. For know, in one sense, grace was exercised upon the chosen—

“Before the daystar knew its place,  
Or planets ran their round.”

I should say that is what I cannot call by any other name than *formative grace*, exercised upon the vessels of mercy at their very birth. It seems to me to be no small mercy that some of us were born of such parents as we were, and that we were born where we were. Some of us began right, and were surrounded by many advantages. We were cradled upon the lap of piety, and cradled upon the knee of holiness. There are some children who are born with a constitution which cannot escape sin, and which at the same time, seems as if it inevitably led them to it. Who can deny that there are some whose passions seem naturally to be so violent, that, notwithstanding almost any and every restraint, they run headlong into sin? And often those failings may be distinctly traced to their parents. It is no small blessing when we can look back and thank God, that if no blue-blood of nobility flows in our veins, yet from our very childhood, we have not heard the voice of blasphemy, nor strayed into the haunts of vice, but that in the very formation of our character, divine grace has always been present with us.

This formative grace, many of you, I have no doubt, can trace in the examples and influences which have followed you from the cradle through life. Why, what a blessing to have had such a Sunday school teacher as some of you had! Other children went to schools, but they had not such a teacher, or such a class as yours. What a privilege to have had such a

minister as some of you had, though perhaps he has fallen asleep now! You know there were others who went to places where there was no earnestness, no life—but that good man who was blessed to you, was full of anxiety for your soul—and at the very first, before you were converted, his preaching helped to form your character! Why, it strikes me that every word I heard, and everything I saw while I was yet a child or a youth, had a part in the formation of my later life. Oh, what a mercy it is to be placed where a holy example and godly conversation tend to form the man in a godly mold. All this may be, you know, without divine grace. I am not speaking, now, of the work of effectual calling, but of that preceding grace which is too much forgotten, though it so richly deserves to be remembered. Think, too, of the prayers which brought tears to our eyes, and the teaching that would not let us sin so deeply as others, of the light which glowed in us, even in our childhood, and seems to have dispelled something of our natural darkness. Think of that earnest face that used to look so steadily on us when we did wrong, and of that mother's tear which seemed as if it would burn itself into our hearts when there had been something amiss that made mother anxious. All this—though it did not convert us—yet it helped to make us what we now are, and unto God let us give the glory!

Furthermore, while there was this *formative grace*, there seems to me, to have gone with it very much of *preventive grace*. How many saints fall into sins which they have to regret even after conversion, while others are saved from leaving the path of morality to wander in the morass of lust and crime! Why, some of us were, by God's grace, placed in positions where we could not well have been guilty of any gross acts of immorality, even if we had tried. We were so hedged about by guardian care, so watched and tended on every side, that we would have been dashing our heads against a stone wall if we had run into any

great or open sin. Oh, what a mercy to be prevented from sinning, when God puts chains across the road, digs ditches, makes hedges, builds walls, and says to us, “No, you shall not go that way, I will not let you; you shall never have *that* to regret; you may desire it, but I will hedge up your way with thorns; you may wish it, but it never shall be yours.” Beloved, I have thanked God a thousand times in my life, that before my conversion, when I had evil desires, I had no opportunities; and on the other hand, that when I had opportunities, I had no desires; for when desires and opportunities come together like the flint and steel, they make the spark that kindles the fire, but neither the one nor the other, though they may both be dangerous, can bring about any great amount of evil, as long as they are kept apart. Let us, then, look back, and if this has been our experience, let us bless the preventing grace of God.

Again, there is another form of grace I must mention, namely, *restraining* grace. Here, you see, I am making a distinction. There are many who did go into sin; they were not wholly prevented from it, but they could not go as far into it as they wanted to do. There is a young man here tonight; he will ask how I know—well, I do know—there is a young man here tonight, who wants to commit a certain sin, but he cannot. Oh, how he wishes to do it, but he cannot! He is placed in such a position of poverty that he cannot play the fine gentleman he would like. There is another. He wants to be dancing at such-and-such a place, but thank God he is lame; there is another, who, if he had had his wish, would have lost his soul—but since his blindness has come upon him, there is some hope for him. Oh how often God has thrown a man on a sick bed to make him well; he would have been such as he was even unto death if he had been well—but God has made him sick, and that sickness has restrained him from sin. It is a mercy for some men that they cannot do what they would, and though “to will

is present” with them, yet even in sin, “how to perform that which they would, they find not.” Ah, my fine fellow, if you could have had your own way, you would have been at the top of the mountain by now! So you think, but no, you would have been over the precipice long before this, if God had you climb at all, and so He has kept you in the valley because He has designs of love towards you, and because you shall not sin as others sin. Divine grace has its hand upon the bridle of your horse. Or perhaps it is a woman and you may speak bitter words against that wife, that sister, or that mother, whom God has put there to hold you back; but you cannot go on, you shall not go on. Another inch forward, and you will be over the precipice and lost, and therefore, God has put that hand there to throw your horse back on its haunches, and make you pause and think, and turn from the error of your ways. What a mercy it is that when God’s people go into sin to any extent, He speaks and says, “To this point shall you go, but no further; here shall your proud sins be stopped!” There is, then, restraining grace.

We shall get still further into the subject when we come to what Dr. John Owen calls the *preparatory work of grace*. Have you ever noticed that parable about the different sorts of ground, and the sower of the seeds? A sower went forth to sow, and some of the seed fell on stony ground; you can understand that, because all men have stones in their hearts. Some fell on the thorns and thistles; you can comprehend that, because men are so given to worldly care. Another part of the seed fell on the beaten path; you can understand that—men are so occupied with worldliness, but, how about the “good ground”? “Good ground”! Is there such a thing as “good ground” by nature? One of the evangelists says that it was, “Honest and good ground.” Now, is there such a difference between hearts and hearts? Are not all men depraved by nature? Yes, he who

doubts human depravity had better begin to study himself. *Question*— if all hearts are bad, how are some hearts good? *Reply*—they are good comparatively; they are good in a *certain sense*. It is not meant in the parable that the good ground was so good that it never would have produced a harvest without the sowing of the seed, but that it had been prepared by providential influences upon it to receive the seed, and in that sense, it may be said to have been “good ground.”

Now, let me show you how God’s grace does come to work on the human heart, so as to make it good soil before the living seed is cast into it, so that before quickening grace visits it, the heart may be called a good heart, because it is prepared to receive that grace. I think this takes place thus—first of all, before quickening grace comes, God often gives an attentive ear, and makes a man *willing to listen to the word*. Not only does he like to listen to it, but he wants to know the meaning of it; there is a little excitement in his mind to know what the gospel tidings really are. He is not saved as yet, but it is always a hopeful sign when a man is willing to listen to the truth, and is anxious to understand it. This is one thing which preceding grace does in making the soul good. In Ezekiel’s vision, as you will recall, before the breath came from the four winds, the bones began to stir, and they came together bone to his bone. So, before the Spirit of God comes to a man in effectual calling, God’s grace often comes to make a stir in the man’s mind, so that he is no longer indifferent to the truth, but is anxious to understand what it means.

The next mark of this gracious work is an *honest heart*. Some persons will not hear you, or if they do, they are always picking holes and finding fault—they are not honest and good ground. But there are others who say, “I will give the man a fair and an honest hearing; I will read the Bible; I will read it honestly; I will really see whether it is the Word of God or not, I will come



to it without any prejudices; or, if I have any prejudices I will throw them aside.” Now, all this is a blessed work of preparatory grace, making the heart ready to receive effectual calling.

Then, when this willingness and honesty are attended with *a tender conscience*, as they are in some unconverted people, this is another great blessing. Some of you are not converted, but you would not do wrong; you are not saints, but you would not tell a lie for the world. I thank God that there are some of you so excellent in morals, that if you were proposed to us for church membership, we could not raise any objection to you, on *that* ground, at any rate. You are as honest as the day is long—as for the things of God, you are outwardly as attentive to them, and as diligent in them, as the most earnest and indefatigable Christians. Now, this is because your conscience is tender. When you do wrong, you cannot sleep at night, and you do not feel at all easy in being without a Savior—I know some of you do not. You have not come to any decision; the grace of God has not really made you feel your thoroughly blind state; still, you are not quite easy. In fact, to go farther, your affections, though not weaned altogether from earth, yet begin to tremble a little as though they would go heavenward. You want to be a Christian—when the communion table is spread, you dare not come downstairs, but I see you looking from the gallery, and you wish you were with us. You know you have not believed in Jesus Christ, and the world keeps you back from doing so; but still there is a kind of twitching in your conscience; you do not know what it is, but there is a something in you that makes you say at times, “O God, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” Yes, and you even go farther than this, and ask to live the righteous man’s life, too. Now, remember, this will not save you—“You must be born-again.” But for all this the Church of God should

feel deeply grateful, for they have seen in themselves that this is often God's preparatory work—clearing away the rubbish and rubble, and digging out the foundations, that Jesus Christ might be laid there, the Cornerstone of future hope and of future happiness!

Another work of grace is the *creation of dissatisfaction with their present state*. How many men we have known who were consciously, “without God and without hope in the world.” The apples of Sodom had turned to ashes and bitterness in their mouth, though at one time all was fair and sweet to their taste. The mirage of life with them has been dispelled, and instead of the green fields, and waving trees, and rippling waters, which their fevered imagination had conjured up in the desert, they can see now nothing but the arid sand and wasteness of desolation which appall their fainting spirits, and promise nothing; no, not even a grave, to cover their whited bones which shall remain a bleached memorial that “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Multitudes have been brought to see the deluge of sin which has covered even the high places of the earth, they find no rest for the sole of their feet, but as yet they know not of an ark, nor of a loving hand, prepared to pull them in as did Noah the dove in olden times. Look at the life of St. Augustine, how wearily he wanders here and there, with a death-thirst in his soul that no fount of philosophy, or scholastic argument, or heretical teaching, could ever satisfy. He was aware of his unhappy estate, and turned his eyes round the circle of the universe, looking for peace, not fully conscious of what he wanted, though feeling an aching void the world could never fill. He had not found the center, fixed and steadfast, around which all else revolved in ceaseless change. Now, all this appetite, this hunger and thirst, I look upon as not of the devil, or of the human heart alone—it was of God. He strips us of all our earthly joy and peace, that, shivering in the cold blast, we

might flee, when drawn by His Spirit, to the “Man who is as a hiding place from the storm, a cover from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Of course, I have not gone fully into this doctrine of preceding grace, but I trust I have said just enough to awaken the gratitude of all the saints who have experienced it, and to make them sing with greater emotion than they have ever done before—

“Determined to save, He watched over my path  
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”

**III. And now, we come to the last point, which is, PAUL’S  
ACTUAL CALLING BY DIVINE GRACE.**

All preparatory work of which we have spoken, was not the source or origin of the vital godliness, which afterwards, distinguished that renowned servant of God—*that came to him suddenly*. Beloved, there may be some here tonight who cannot discern anything in themselves of God’s work of grace at all. I do not wonder at this. I do not suppose that the apostle could discern it in himself, or even thought of looking for it. He was as careless of Christ, as is the butterfly of the honey in the flowers. He lived with no thought of honoring Jesus, and no desire to magnify Him, but with the very reverse passion glowing like a hot coal within his soul; and yet, in a moment, he was turned from an enemy into a friend. Oh, what a mercy it would be if some here tonight were turned from enemies into friends in a moment— and we are not without hope but that this will be the case.

You have hated Christ, my friend; you have hated Him boldly and decidedly; You have not been a sneaking sort of adversary, but have opposed Him frankly and openly. Now, why did you do it? I am sorry for your sin, but I like your

honesty. What is there in the person of Christ for you to hate? Men hated Him while He was on earth, and yet He died for them! Can you hate Him for that? He came into this world to gain no honor for Himself—He had honor enough in heaven, but He gave it up for the sake of men. When He died, He had not amassed a fortune, nor gathered about Him a troop of soldiers, nor had He conquered provinces and He died naked on the cross! Nothing brought Him here but selfless affection, and when He came, He spent His life in deeds of holiness and good. For which of these things can you hate Him? The amazing loving kindness of Christ Jesus towards sinners should, in itself, disarm your animosity, and turn your hatred of Him to love. Alas, I know that this thought of itself will not do it, but the Spirit of God can. If the Spirit of God once comes in contact with your souls, and shows you that Christ died for you, your enmity towards Christ will be over. Dr. Gifford once went to see a woman in prison who had been a very gross offender. She was such a hardened reprobate, that the doctor began by discoursing with her about the judgments of God, and the punishments of hell, but she only laughed him to scorn, and called him shameful names.

The doctor burst into tears, and said, “And yet, poor soul, there is mercy for you, even for such as you are, though you have laughed in the face of Him who would do you good. Christ is able to forgive you, hard though you are; and I hope that He will yet take you to dwell with Him at His right hand.” In a moment the woman stopped her laughing, sat down quietly, burst into tears, and said, “Don’t talk to me in that way; I have always been told that I should be damned, and I made up my mind to be. I knew there was no chance, and so I have gone on from one sin to another—but oh, if there is a hope of mercy for *me*, that is another thing; if there is a possibility of my being forgiven, that is another thing.” The doctor at once

opened his Bible, and began to read to her these words, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.” The greatest brokenness of heart followed. In subsequent visits the doctor was gratified to find that she was brought to Christ, and though she had to undergo a sentence for many years at the time, yet years later, the godly man saw her walking honestly and uprightly as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Sinner, I wish that thought would bring *you* to Christ! O that you would know that He has chosen *you*, that He has separated *you* for Himself, and to be His, even from your mother’s womb! Ah, you have played the harlot, but He will bring you back; you have sinned very greatly, but you shall one day be clothed in the white robe, and wear the everlasting crown. Oh, blush and be ashamed that you should ever have sinned as you have done. You have been a thief, and a drunkard; you have brought your mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, but her prayers are going up even now to heaven, and you shall be brought in yet. O, stubborn sinner, my Master means to have you. Run as you will, you wandering sheep, the Shepherd is after you—yield, yield, yield now! O, Prodigal, your Father’s heart is open; arise, and go to your Father! You are ashamed to go, are you? Oh, let that shame make you go faster; let it not keep you back. Jesus bled, Jesus wept, and Jesus lives in heaven. “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, let him buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” “Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” There is no sinner too black to be forgiven. There are no iniquities that can damn you if you believe in Jesus. All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven him who puts his trust in the shadow of Jehovah-Jesus. Look to Him, He dies, and He lives; look, He rises, He pleads above! “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I trust that the whole of your

past mysterious life, my dear fellow sinner, will be explained to you tonight by your believing in Jesus. That will be the golden key which will open the secret, and you will say, “Now I see it; I could not tell what that mysterious hand was, that kept me back from doing a certain thing; I could not understand why I was led into such a path, but now I know that it was to take me to the feet of the blessed Savior where I might be happy forever.” As you look back, and think of all the dealings of divine grace and providence with you throughout your life, you will sing—

“Ah, who am I that God has saved  
Me from the doom I did desire,  
And crossed the lot myself did crave,  
To set me even higher?”

I must give one word of warning to those who are afflicting themselves with a notion that in order to a true, real conversion, they must have a long course of agonizing soul-conflict. You must mark that I am NOT teaching this! The new birth was instantaneous—at once! Saul of Tarsus calls Him Lord, and it is only three days that darkness rests upon him. This is the longest case recorded in the Bible—and how short a time in darkness and anguish that is, compared with the experience of some whom you are regarding as models on which God must act in your case. Remember that God is not the God of uniformity, though He is of union and peace. He may lead you at once into joy and peace, as Nathanael, who said as soon as he saw Christ, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” God may, and doubtless has been, blessing you through His grace from your birth, but He needs not to plunge you many days in the cold dark waters of conviction to wash away your sin—the blood of Christ at *once* can cleanse from all

sin if you confide your soul to Him. Believe, therefore, and you are at once justified and at peace with God.

May the Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake.

## 657 SATANIC HINDRANCES – I THESS. 2:18

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 29th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Satan hindered us.” — I Thessalonians 2:18

PAUL, and Silas, and Timothy, were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, “Satan hindered us.” *It was not from want of will*, for they had a very great attachment to the Thessalonian brethren, and they longed to look them in the face again. They said of the Thessalonians, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” Their will was overruled as to visiting the church together, but being anxious for its welfare, they sent Timothy alone to minister for a time in its midst. It was not want of will which hindered them, but want of power. *They were not prevented by God’s special providence.* We find, on certain occasions, that Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his heart would have led him. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit allowed them not.” “They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia,” but their course was directed towards Troas, that they might preach in Europe the unsearchable riches of Christ. They could not, however, trace their absence from Thessalonica to any divine



interposition; it appeared to them to proceed from the great adversary—"Satan hindered them."

How Satan did so it would be useless to affirm dogmatically, but we may form a reasonable conjecture. I find in the margin of my Pulpit Bible by Bagster, this note, which may probably be correct. "Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea, and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed." Yet I can hardly allow this to have been the only hindrance, for Paul was very courageous, and having a strong desire to visit Thessalonica, no fear of opposition would have kept him away. He did not shun the hottest part of the battle, but like a truly valiant champion, delighted most to be found in the thick of his foes. Possibly the antagonism of the various philosophers whom he met with at Athens, and the heresies at Corinth, from which it seems that this Epistle was written, may have called for his presence on the scene of action. He felt that he could not leave struggling churches to their enemies; he must contend with the grievous wolves, and unmask the evil ones who wore the garb of angels of light. Satan had moved the enemies of the truth of God to industrious opposition, and thus, the apostle and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had excited dissensions and discords in the churches which Paul was visiting, and therefore, he was obliged to stop first in one, and then in another, to settle their differences; to bring to bear the weight of his own spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the church to restore them to unity. Well, whether persecution, or philosophic heresy, or the divisions of the church, were the outward instruments we cannot tell, but Satan was assuredly the prime mover.

You will perhaps wonder why the devil should care so much about Paul and his whereabouts. Why should he take so much interest in keeping these three men from that particular church? This leads us to observe what amazing importance is attached to the action of Christian ministers. Here is the master of all evil, the prince of the power of the air, intently watching the journeying of three humble men; and apparently far more concerned about their movements than about the doings of Nero or Tiberius. These despised heralds of mercy were his most dreaded foes; they preached that Name which makes hell tremble; they declared that righteousness against which satanic hate always vents itself with its utmost power. With malicious glance, the archenemy watched their daily path, and with cunning hands hindered them at all points. It strikes us that Satan was desirous to keep these apostolic men from the church of Thessalonica because the church was young and weak, and he thought that if it was not fostered and succored by the preaching and presence of Paul, he might yet slay the young child. Moreover, he has of old a fierce hatred of the preaching of the gospel, and possibly there had been no public declaration of the truth of God throughout Thessalonica since Paul had gone, and he was afraid lest the fire-brands of gospel truth should be again flung in among the masses, and a gracious conflagration should take place. Besides, Satan always hates Christian fellowship—it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another, he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly communion than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation—and so he would keep Paul away from these brethren who might have gladdened his heart, and whose hearts he might have cheered; he would hinder their fraternal communion that they might miss the strength which always flows from Christian communion and Christian sympathy.

This is not the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men—indeed, this has been his practice in all ages, and we have selected this one particular incident that some who are hindered by Satan may draw comfort from it, and that we may have an opportunity (if the Spirit of God shall enable us) of saying a good and forceful word to any who count it strange because this fiery trial has happened to them.

**I.** Let us open our discourse by observing that **IT HAS BEEN SATAN'S PRACTICE OF OLD TO HINDER, WHEREVER HE COULD, THE WORK OF GOD.** "Satan hindered us," is the testimony which all the saints in heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality—"Satan hindered us."

In sacred writ, we find Satan interfering to hinder the completeness of *the personal character of individual saints*. The man of Uz was perfect and upright before God, and to all appearances would persevere in producing a finished picture of what the believer in God should be. Satan could find no fault with his actions, and only dared to impute wrong motives to him. He had considered Job, and he could find no mischief in him—but then he hinted to God, "Have You not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" Satan sought to turn the life-blessing which Job was given of God into a curse, and therefore, he buffeted him sorely. He stripped him of all his substance. The evil messengers trod upon one another's heels—and their tidings of woe only ceased when his goods were all destroyed, and his children had all perished. The poor afflicted parent was then struck in his bone and in his flesh, till he was made to sit upon a dunghill and scrape himself with a potsherd. Even then, the picture had no blot of sin upon it, the pencil was held with a steady hand by the patient one; and therefore, Satan made

another attempt to hinder his retaining his holy character—he excited his wife to say, “Why do you hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” This was a great and grievous hindrance to the completion of Job’s marvelous career, but, glory be unto God, the man of patience not only overcame Satan, but he made him a steppingstone to a yet greater height of illustrious virtue, for you know the patience of Job, and you would not have known it if Satan had not illuminated it with the blaze of flaming afflictions. Had not the vessel been burnt in the furnace, the bright colors had not been so fixed and abiding. The trial through which Job passed brought out the luster of his matchless endurance in submission and resignation to God.

Now, just as the enemy of old waylaid and beset the patriarch to hinder his perseverance in the fair path of excellence, so will he do with us. You may be congratulating yourself this morning, “I have up to now walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity.” Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been up to now a firm believer, your faith will, before long, be attacked; if up till now you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. O that we had among us more eminence of piety, more generosity of character, more fidelity of behavior! In all these respects, I doubt not, many have set out with the highest aims and intentions, but alas, how often have they had to cry, “Satan hindered us!”

This is not the enemy’s only business, for he is very earnest in endeavoring to hinder *the emancipation of the Lord’s redeemed ones*. You know the memorable story of Moses—when the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God’s servant stood before their haughty oppressor with his rod in his hand, and in

Jehovah's name he declared, "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me." A sign was required. The rod was cast upon the ground, and it became a serpent. At this point, Satan hindered. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. We read that the magicians did so with their enchantments, whether by devilish arts or by sleight of hand, we need not now inquire—in either case, they did the devil service, and they did it well—for Pharaoh's heart was hardened when he saw that the magicians worked, in appearance, the same miracles as Moses. Brethren, take this as a type of Satan's hindrances to the Word of the Lord. Christ's servants came forth to preach the gospel; their ministry was attended with signs and wonders. "My kingdom is shaken," said the prince of evil, "I must bestir myself." And straightway, he sent magicians to work lying signs and wonders without number. Apocryphal wonders were and are as plentiful as the frogs of Egypt. Did the apostles preach the sacrifice of Christ?—the devil's apostles preached the sacrifice of the "mass." Did the saints uplift the cross?—the devil's servants upheld the crucifix! Did God's ministers speak of Jesus as the one infallible Head of the Church?—the devil's servants proclaimed the false priest of Rome as standing in the same place! Romanism is a most ingenious imitation of the gospel—it is the magicians, "doing so with their enchantments." If you study well the spirit and genius of the great antichrist, you will see that its great power lies in its being an exceedingly clever counterfeit of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as tinsel could counterfeit gold, and paste could simulate the gem, and candlelight could rival the sun in its glory, and a drop in the bucket could imitate the sea in its strength, it has copied God's great masterpiece, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! And to this day, as God's servants scatter the pure gold of the truth of God, their worst enemies are those who utter base coin,

on which they have feloniously stamped the image and superscription of the King of kings.

You have another case farther on in history—and all Old Testament history is typical of what is going on around us now. God was about to give a most wonderful system of instruction to Israel and to the human race, by way of type and ceremony, in the wilderness. Aaron and his sons were selected to represent the great High Priest of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. In every garment which they wore, there was a symbolical significance—every vessel of that sanctuary in which they ministered taught a lesson—every single act of worship, whether it were the sprinkling of blood, or the burning of incense, was made to teach precious and important truths of God to the sons of men. What a noble roll was that volume of the Book which was unfolded in the wilderness at the foot of Sinai! How God declared Himself and the glory of the coming Messiah in the persons of Aaron and his sons! What then? With this, Satan interfered. Moses and Aaron could say, “Satan hindered us.” Korah, Dathan, and Abiram arrogantly claimed a right to the priesthood; and on a certain day, they stood forth with bronze censers in their hands, thrusting themselves impudently into the office which the Lord had assigned to Aaron and to his sons. The earth opened and swallowed them up alive—true prophecy of what shall become of those who thrust themselves into the office of the priesthood where none but Jesus Christ can stand! You may see the parallel this day. Christ Jesus is the only Priest who offers sacrifice of blood, and He brings that sacrifice no more—for having once offered it, He has perfected forever those who are set apart. “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” Paul, with the strongest force of logic, proves that Christ does not offer a continual sacrifice, but that,

having offered it once and for all, His work is finished, and He sits down at the right hand of the Father.

Now, this doctrine of a finished atonement, and a completed sacrifice seemed likely to overrun the world—it was such a gracious unfolding of the divine mind, that Satan could not look upon it without desiring to hinder it; and, therefore, look on every hand, and you can see Korah, Dathan and Abiram in those churches which are branches of antichrist—I mean the Anglican *and* the Roman! Men to this very day call themselves “priests,” and read prayers from a book in which the decree runs, “Then shall the priest say \_\_\_\_\_.” These assume to themselves a priesthood other than that which is common to all the saints—some of them even claim to offer a daily “sacrifice,” to celebrate an “unbloody sacrifice” at the thing which they call an “altar.” And they claim to have power to forgive sins, saying to sick and dying persons, “By authority committed unto me, I absolve you from all your sins.” This, in England! And this, throughout Europe! This is the great hindrance to the propagation of the gospel—the priestly pretensions of a set of men who are not priests of God, though they may be priests of Baal. Thus, the ministers of Jesus are made to cry, “Satan hinders us.”

Take another instance of satanic hatred. When Joshua had led the tribes across the Jordan, they were to attack the various cities which God had given them for a heritage, and from Dan to Beersheba, the whole land was to be theirs. After the taking of Jericho, the first contact into which they came with the heathen Canaanites ended in disastrous defeat to the servants of God. “They fled,” it is written, “before the men of Ai.” Here, again, you hear the cry, “Satan hindered us.” Joshua might have gone from city to city exterminating the nations, as they justly deserved to be, but Achan had taken of the accursed thing, and hidden it in his tent, therefore, no victory could be won by

Israel till his theft and sacrilege had been put away. Beloved, this is symbolic of the Christian Church. We might go from victory to victory; our home mission operations might be successful, and our foreign agencies might be crowned with triumph, if it were not that we have Achans in the camp at home. When churches have no conversions, it is more than probable that hypocrites concealed among them have turned away the Lord's blessing. You who are inconsistent, who make the profession of religion the means of getting wealth; you who unite yourselves with God's people, but at the same time covet the goodly Babylonian garment, and the wedge of gold, *you* are they who cut the sinews of Zion's strength; you prevent the Israel of God from going forth to victory! Ah, little do we know, beloved, how Satan has hindered us. We, as a church, have had much reason to thank God, but how many more might within these walls have been added to the number of this church if it had not been for the coldness of some, the indifference of others, the inconsistency of a few, and the worldliness of many more? Satan hinders us not merely by direct opposition, but by sending Achans into the midst of our camp.

I will give you one more picture. View the building of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. When Ezra and Nehemiah were found to build, the devil was sure to stir up Sanballat and Tobiah to cast down. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God's servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant followers who seek to counteract their efforts.

The history of the Old Testament Church is a history of Satan endeavoring to hinder the work of the Lord. I am sure you will admit it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth, Satan hindered Him. He dared to attack Him to His face, and when that failed, Pharisees,



Sadducees, Herodians, and men of all sorts hindered Him. When the apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them; and when persecution availed not, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church—Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter; the glory had departed, and the luster of truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness, and worldliness, Satan hindered them. When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had His Latimers, and His Wickcliffes, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the modern Reformation, Whitefield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to disgrace and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan has hindered us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and at midnight, Satan has hindered us. If we toil in the field, he seeks to break the plow; if we build the walls, he labors to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—Satan hinders us everywhere.

**II. We shall now, in the second place, INDICATE MANY WAYS IN WHICH SATAN HAS HINDERED US.**

The prince of evil is very busy in hindering *those who are just coming to Jesus Christ*. Here, he spends the main part of his skill. Some of us, who know the Savior, recollect the fierce conflicts which we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Others of you, here this morning, are just passing through that trying season—I will address myself to you. Beloved friends, you long to be saved, but ever since you have

given any attention to these eternal things, you have been the victim of deep distress of mind. Do not marvel at this. This is usual, so usual as to be almost universal. I should not wonder if you are perplexed with the doctrine of election. It will be suggested to you that you are not one of the chosen of God, although your common sense will teach you that it might just as well be suggested to you that you are, since you know neither the one nor the other, nor indeed can know until you have believed in Jesus—Your present business is with the precept which is revealed, not with election which is concealed. Your business is with that exhortation, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” It is possible that the great battlefield between predestination and free will may be the dry and desert place in which your soul is wandering—now, you will never find any comfort there. The wisest of men have despaired of ever solving the mystery of those two matters, and it is not at all probable that you will find peace in puzzling yourself about it. Your business is not with metaphysical difficulty, but with faith in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is simple and plain enough. It is possible that your sins now come to your remembrance, and though once you thought little enough of them, now it is hinted to you by satanic malice that they are too great to be pardoned—to which, I pray you, give the lie, by telling Satan this truth—“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

It is very likely that the sin against the Holy Spirit much molests you. You read that whoever shall speak a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him. In this, too, you may be greatly tried. And I wonder not that you are, for this is a most painfully difficult subject. One fact may cheer you—if you repent of your sins, you have not committed the unpardonable offense, since that sin necessitates hardness of heart *forever*; and so long as a man has any tenderness of

conscience, and any softness of spirit, he has not so renounced the Holy Spirit as to have lost His presence. It may be that you are the victim of blasphemous thoughts. This very morning, since you have been sitting here, torrents of the filth of hell have been pouring through your soul. At this, be not astonished, for there are some of us who delight in holiness, and are pure in heart, who nevertheless, have been at times sorely tried with thoughts which were never born in our hearts, but which were injected into them—suggestions born in hell, not in our spirits—to be hated, and to be loathed, but cast into our minds that they might hinder and trouble us. Now, though Satan may hinder you as he did the child who was brought to Jesus, of whom we read that as he was, “coming, the devil threw him down and tore him,” yet do you come notwithstanding, for though seven devils were in him, Jesus would not cast the coming sinner out. Even though you should feel a conviction that the unpardonable sin has fallen to your lot, yet dare to trust in Jesus; and, if you do that, I guarantee you, there shall be a joy and a peace in believing which shall overcome him of whom we read, that he has “hindered us.”

But I must not stay long on any one point where there are so many. Satan is sure to hinder Christians *when they are earnest in prayer*. Have you not frequently found, dear friends, when you have been most earnest in supplication, that something or other will start across your mind to make you cease from the exercise? It appears to me that we shake the tree and no fruit drops from it; and just when one more shake would bring down the luscious fruit, the devil touches us on the shoulder and tells us it is time to be gone, and so we miss the blessing we might have attained. I mean that just when prayer would be the most successful, we are tempted to abstain from it. When my spirit has sometimes laid hold upon the Angel, I have been painfully conscious of a counter influence urging me to cease from such

persistence, and let the Lord alone, for His will would be done; or if the temptation did not come in that shape yet in some other, to cease to pray because prayer, after all, could not avail. O brethren, I know if you are much in prayer you can sing Cowper's hymn—

“What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to the mercy seat.”

The same is true of *Christians when under the promptings of the Spirit of God, or when planning any good work*. You have been prompted, sometimes, to speak to such a one. “Run, speak to that young man,” has been the message in your ear. You have not done it—Satan has hindered you. You have been told on a certain occasion—you do not know how, (but believe me, we ought to pay great respect to these inward whispers), to visit such-and-such a person, and help him. You have not done it—Satan hindered you. You have been sitting down by the fire one evening reading a missionary report concerning Hindustan, or some district destitute of the truth of God, and you have thought, “Now, I have a little money which I might give to this project,” but then it has come across you that there is another way of spending it more profitably on your family—so Satan has hindered you. Or you yourself thought of doing a little in a certain district by way of preaching and teaching, or commencing some new Ragged School, or some other form of Christian effort—but as sure as ever you began to plan it, something or other arose and Satan hindered you. If he possibly can, he will come upon God's people in those times when they are full of thought and ardor, and ready for Christian effort, that he may murder their infant plans, and cast these suggestions of the Holy Spirit out of their minds.

How often, too, has Satan hindered us *when we have entered into the work!* In fact, beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise. I have taken it as a certain sign that I am doing little good when the devil is quiet. It is generally a sign that Christ's kingdom is coming when men begin to lie against you, and slander you, and the world is in an uproar, casting out your name as evil. Oh, those blessed tempests! Do not give me calm weather when the air is still and heavy, and when lethargy is creeping over one's spirit. Lord, send a hurricane. Give us a little stormy weather! When the lightning flashes, and the thunder rolls, then God's servants know that the Lord is abroad, and that His right hand is no longer in His bosom—that the moral atmosphere will get clear—that God's kingdom will come, and His will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven! "Peace, peace, peace!" That is the flap of the dragon's wings! The stern voice which proclaims perpetual war is the voice of the Captain of our salvation. You ask, how is this? "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword, for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Peace, physical, Christ makes; there is to be no strife with the fist, no blow with the sword, but *moral* peace and *spiritual* peace can never be in this world where Jesus Christ is, so long as *error* is there. But, you know, beloved that you cannot do any good thing but what the devil will be sure to hinder you. What then? Up and at him! Cowardly looks and faint counsels are not for warriors of the cross! Expect fights and you will not be disappointed. Whitefield used to say that some divines would go from the first of January to the end of December with a perfectly whole skin; the devil never thought them worthwhile attacking; but, he said, let us begin to preach with all our might,

and soul, and strength, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will soon put a fool's cap on our heads, and begin laughing at us, and ridiculing us—but if so, so much the better! We are not alarmed because Satan hinders us!

Nor will he only hinder us in working; he will hinder us *in seeking to unite with one another*. We are about to make an effort, as Christian Churches in London, to come closer together, and I am happy to find indications of success. But I should not wonder but what Satan will hinder us, and I would ask your prayers that Satan may be put to the rout in this matter, and that the union of our churches may be accomplished. As a church ourselves, we have walked together in peace for a long time, but I should not marvel if Satan should try to thrust in the cloven foot to hinder our walking in love, and peace, and unity.

Satan will hinder us in *our communion with Jesus Christ*. When at His table we say to ourselves, “I shall have a sweet moment now,” but just then vanity intrudes. Like Abraham, you offer the sacrifice, but the unclean birds come down upon it, and you have need to drive them away. “Satan hindered us.” He is not omnipresent, but by his numerous servants he works in all kinds of places, and manages to distract the saints when they would serve the Lord.

**III.** In the third place, **THERE ARE TWO OR THREE RULES BY WHICH THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE DETECTED AS SATANIC.**

I think I heard somebody saying to himself this morning, “Yes, I should have risen in the world, and have been a man of money now, if it had not been that Satan hindered me.” Do not believe it, dear friend! I do not believe that Satan generally hinders people from getting rich. He would just as soon that they should be rich as poor; he delights to see God's servants set upon the pinnacle of the temple, for he knows the position

to be dangerous. High places and God's praise seldom agree. If you have been hindered in growing rich, I should rather set that down to the good providence of God which would not place you where you could not have borne the temptation. "Yes," said another, "I had intended to have lived in a certain district and done good, and have not been able to go—perhaps that is the devil." Perhaps it was—perhaps it was not. God's providence will know best where to place us. We are not always choosers of our own locality—and so we are not always to conclude, when we are hindered and disappointed in our own intentions, that Satan has done it, for it may very often be the good providence of God.

But how may I tell when Satan hinders me? I think you may tell, first, *by the object*. Satan's object in hindering us is to prevent our glorifying God. If anything has happened to you, which has prevented your growing holy, useful, humble, and sanctified, *then*, you may trace that to Satan. If the distinct object of the interference to the general current of your life has been that you may be turned from righteousness into sin, then from the object you may guess the author. It is not God who does this, but Satan. Yet know that God does, sometimes, put apparent hindrances in the way of His own people—even in reference to their usefulness and growth in grace—but then His objective is still to be considered—it is to try His saints, and so to strengthen them; while the objective of Satan is to turn them out of the right road, and make them take the crooked way.

You may tell the suggestions of Satan, again, *by the method* in which they come—God employs good motives, Satan bad ones. If that which has turned you away from your objective has been a bad thought, a bad doctrine, bad teaching, a bad motive—that never came from *God*—that must be from Satan.

Again, you may tell them from *their nature*. Whenever an impediment to usefulness is pleasing, gratifying to you,

consider that it came from Satan. Satan never brushes the feathers of his birds the wrong way; he generally deals with us according to our tastes and likes. He flavors his bait to his fish; he knows exactly how to deal with each man, and to put that motive which will fall in with the suggestions of poor carnal nature. Now, if the difficulty in your way is rather contrary *to* yourself than *for* yourself, then it comes from God. But if that which now is a hindrance brings you gain, or pleasure in any way, rest assured it came from Satan.

We can tell the suggestions of Satan, once more, by their season. Hindrances to prayer, for instance, if they are satanic, come *out of the natural course and relation of human thoughts*. It is a law of mental science that one thought suggests another, and the next, the next, and so on, as the links of a chain draw one another. But satanic temptations do not come in the regular order of thinking; they dash upon the mind at odd times. My soul is in prayer—it would be unnatural that I should then blaspheme—yet then the blasphemy comes; therefore, it is clearly satanic, and not from my own mind. If I am set upon doing my Master's will, and presently an unfaithful thought assails me, and being apart from the natural run of my mind and thoughts, it may be at once ejected as not being mine, and may be set down to the account of the devil, who is the true father of it. By these means, I think we may tell when Satan hinders, and when it is our own heart, or when it is of God. We ought carefully to watch that we do not put the saddle on the wrong horse. Do not blame the devil when it is yourself, and on the other hand, when the Lord puts a bar in your way, do not say, "That is Satan," and so go against the providence of God. It may be difficult at times to see the way of duty, but if you go to the throne of God in prayer, you will soon discover it. "Bring here the ephod," said David, when he was in difficulty. Say the same! Go to the great High Priest whose



business it is to give forth the oracle! Lo, upon His breast hangs the Urim and Thummim and you shall, from Him, find direction in every time of difficulty and dilemma.

**IV.** Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, **WHAT THEN?**

I have but one piece of advice and that is, *go on*, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Spirit enables you. If Satan hinders you, I have already hinted that this opposition should cheer you. “I did not expect,” said a Christian minister, “to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here. I always count it,” he said, “to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy, and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine.” If you are now opposed, and you can trace that opposition distinctly to Satan, congratulate yourself upon it—do not sit down and fret! Why, it is a great thing that a poor creature like you can actually vex the great prince of darkness and win his hate. It makes the race of man the more noble that it comes in conflict with a race of spirits, and stands foot to foot even with the prince of darkness himself. It is a dreadful thing, doubtless, that you should be hindered by such an adversary, but it is most hopeful, for if he were your friend, you might have cause to fear, indeed. Stand out against him because *you now have an opportunity of making a greater gain than you could have had, had he been quiet*. You could never have had a victory over him if you had not engaged in conflict with him. The poor saint would go on his inglorious way to heaven if he were unmolested, but being molested, every step of his pathway becomes glorious. Our position today is like that described by Bunyan, when from the top of the palace the song was heard—

“Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory you shall win.”

Now merely to ascend the stairs of the palace, though safe work, would not have been very ennobling; but when the enemy crowded around the door, and blocked up every stair, and the hero came to the man with the ink-horn, who sat before the door and said, "Write my name down, sir," then, to get from the lowest step to the top, where the bright ones were singing, every inch was glorious. If devils did not oppose my path from earth to heaven, I might travel joyously, peacefully, safely—but certainly without renown; but now, when every step is contested in winning our pathway to glory, every single step is covered with immortal fame. Press on then, Christian, the more opposition, the more honor.

Be in earnest against these hindrances when you consider, again, *what you lose if you do not resist him and overcome him*. To allow Satan to overcome me would be eternal ruin to my soul. Certainly it would forever blast all hopes of my usefulness. If I retreat and turn my back in the day of battle, what will the rest of God's servants say? What shouts of derision will ring over the battlefield! How will the banner of the covenant be trailed in the mire! Why, we must not, we *dare* not, play the coward; we dare not give way to the insinuation of Satan, and turn from the Master, for the defeat were then too dreadful to be endured. Beloved, let me feed your courage with the recollection that *your Lord and Master has overcome*. See Him there before you. He, of the thorn-crown, has fought the enemy, and broken his head—Satan has been completely worsted by the Captain of your salvation; and that victory was representative—he fought and won it for you! You have to contend with a defeated foe, and one who knows and feels his disgrace; and though he may fight with desperation, yet he fights not with true courage, for he is hopeless of ultimate victory. Strike, then, for Christ has destroyed him! Down with him, for Jesus has had him under

His foot! You, weakest of the entire host, you will be triumphant, for the Captain has triumphed before you.

Lastly, remember that *you have a promise* to make you gird up your loins and play the man this day. “Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you.” Christian minister, resign not your situation; do not think of sending in your resignation because the church is divided, and because the enemy is making headway. Resist the devil. Flee not, but make him flee! Young Christian men, you who have begun to preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or visit from house to house, though Satan hinders you very much, I pray you now, redouble your efforts—it is because Satan is afraid of you that he resists you, because he would rob you of the great blessing which is now descending on your head. Resist him and stand fast. You Christians, pleading in prayer, let not go your hold upon the covenant Angel, for now that Satan hinders you, it is because the blessing is descending. You who are seeking Christ, close not those eyes; turn not away your face from Calvary’s streaming tree—now that Satan hinders you, it is because the night is almost over, and the daystar begins to shine.

Brethren, you who are most molested, most sorrowfully tried, most borne down, yours is the brighter hope—be courageous now; play the man for God, for Christ, for your own soul, and the day shall yet come when you, with your Master, shall ride triumphantly through the streets of the New Jerusalem, sin, death and hell captive at your chariot wheels, and you, with your Lord, will be crowned as victor, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb!

May God bless dear friends now present; I do not know to whom this sermon may be most suitable, but I believe it is sent especially to certain tried saints; the Lord enable them to find comfort in it. Amen.

# 658 FROM THE DUNGHILL TO THE THRONE – PS. 113:7-8

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 5th, 1865,  
by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.” — Psalm 113:7-8

THE GREATNESS AND MAJESTY of the Most High God are utterly inconceivable. The most masterly minds, when in the most spiritual state, have felt it impossible for the utmost stretch of their imagination to reach to the grandeur of God. Our loftiest conceptions of the universe probably fall very far short of what it really is; although the researches of astronomy have revealed facts surpassing all the powers of the human mind in the attempt to grasp them. Thought, reason, understanding, and even imagination are bewildered in the vast and illimitable fields of space amidst the marvels of God's handiwork. Yet all the wonders which the human eye has seen or mortal spirit guessed at, are but parts of His ways. We have heard no more than one stanza of creation's never-ending Psalm. We have viewed but one stone in the vast mosaic of the Maker's works. A microscopic atom of life in a drop of water may know as much of the great sea as we do of the universe as a whole. An ant creeping over a sand heap by the seaside must not boast of having counted the grains which bound the

ocean—nor must the most learned mortal dream that he has a full idea of the vast creation of God. Above all this, however, is the fact that all these wondrous works bear no more proportion to the unseen, all-powerful God, than one line written by the pen of Milton would bear to his masterly mind. When God has made all that He ordains to create, and when we have seen all that He has made, yet there remains in Him infinite possibilities of creation. The potter is far greater than the vessel which he fashions, and the Lord is infinitely greater than all His works. He fills all things, but all things cannot fill Him. He contains immensity; He grasps eternity; but neither immensity nor eternity can encompass Him—

“Great God, how infinite You are!  
What worthless worms are we!”

Very fittingly does the psalmist sing of Him as God humbling Himself to behold the things which are in heaven. Those majestic beings, cherubim and seraphim, who flash with wings of fire to obey the behests of the Eternal, are not to be observed of Him unless, speaking after the manner of men, in condescension He stoops Himself to view them. We sing of the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, as the Lord's, and speak of those glorious places as being His peculiar abode, and so they are; and yet the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and celestial spirits are as nothing, when compared with Him. Consider, then, the condescension of the Lord in visiting the sons of men! What a stoop is here, my brethren! From the throne of the infinite, to the clay tenements of man! Surely in a moment you will perceive that all gradations of rank among our race of worms must be less than nothing, and even contemptible with Him! He does not consort with kings when He descends to earth, for what is their mimic pomp to Him?

He does not seek out for Himself regal society as being more worthy of His dignity than association with poverty, for what is the child's play of courtly grandeur to Him? A king! What is he but a crowned worm? A king! What is he but dust and ashes, raised a very little higher on the ash heap than the rest of the dust? The Lord, therefore, makes but small account of the honor which comes from man whose breath is in His nostrils—

“With scorn divine, He turns His eyes  
From towers of haughty kings.”

When His awful chariot rolls downward from the skies, He makes men mark the fact of His condescension, by visiting men of low estate. He would have to stoop to a palace; it is no more if He stoops to a dunghill. When He is engaged on mercy's errands, having bowed so low as to enter a cabinet-council chamber, it is scarcely a step further to the haunt of poverty and the den of vice. Courage, you most humble of the sons of men; He who reigns in heaven despises none.

“He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill.” This has frequently occurred in providence. God in His arrangements singularly alters the position of men. History is not without many instances, in which the uppermost have become lowest, and the lowest have been highest. Verily, “There are first who shall be last, and there are last who shall be first.” Solomon said, “I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking in the dust.” And the same thing has been seen even in these modern times, when kings have fled their thrones, and men who were prowling about in poverty have mounted to imperial power. God in providence often laughs at pedigree and ancestry, and stains the honor and

dignity of everything in which human nature boasts itself. From the kennel to the palace is an easy ascent when heaven favors.

It is not upon providence that I intend to dilate, this morning. My text has a special bearing upon God's acts of grace. Here it is above all others that we see the condescending sovereignty of His dealings. He takes the base things of the world, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. He selects for Himself those whom men would have repudiated with scorn—He covers His tabernacle of witness with badgers' skins, chooses unhewn stones to be the materials for His altar, a bush for a place of blazing manifestation, and a shepherd boy to be the man after His own heart. Those persons and things, which are despised among men, are often highly esteemed in the sight of God.

In considering the text this morning, let us notice the objects of God's choice. First, *where some of them are*; secondly, *how He takes them from their degraded state*; thirdly, *how He lifts them up*; and fourthly, *where He puts them*.

It will be the history of a child of God, *from the dunghill to the throne*. Novelists are plastering our walls with sensational titles; here is one which might even satisfy them in their ambition to delight the morbid cravings of this age. "*From the dunghill to the throne*," is a subject which ought to win your attention, and if it does not, the fault must surely lie with me; in it there will always be a blessed novelty of interest; and yet, we thank God that it is a correct description of the upward experience of all the Lord's people. He finds tens of thousands in the dunghill-state, and bears them up by the arms of His mercy, till He makes them to sit among the princes of His people.

**I. We will begin where God began with us. WHERE GOD'S CHOSEN ONES ARE WHEN HE MEETS WITH THEM.**

The expression used in the text implies, in the first place, that *many of them are in the lowest scale socially*. Sovereign grace has a people everywhere, in all ranks and conditions of men. Were we taken up to heaven, and did the heavenly spirits wear any token of their rank on earth, we would, on returning, say, "Here and there I saw a king; I marked a few princes of the blood, and a handful of peers of the realm; I observed a little company of the prudent, and a slender band of the rich and famous; but I saw a great company of the poor and the unknown, who were rich in faith and known unto the Lord." The Lord excludes no man from His election on account of his rank or condition. We shall not err if we say—

"While grace is given to the prince,  
The poor receive their share.  
No mortal has a just pretense  
To perish in despair."

Yet how true it is, that many of those whom God has chosen, are found not simply among the workers, but among the poorest ranks of the sons of toil! There are some whose daily toil can scarcely find them bread enough to keep body and soul together, and yet, they have fed daintily upon the bread of heaven. Many are clad in garments of the meanest kind, patched and mended everywhere, and yet they are as gloriously arrayed in the sight of God and the holy angels, as the brightest of the saints; "Yet, I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Some of the sweetest biographies of Christians have been the lives of the lowly culled from the annals of the poor. Who has not read, *The Young Cottager*, and, *The Dairyman's Daughter*? Who has not found the greatest pleasure in visiting those bed-ridden ones, who lie in the alms' room, those saints of God who owe to charity their



daily food, because sickness has deprived them of the means of earning their bread?

My poor hearer, you may this morning, while sitting in that pew, feel as if you were scarcely respectable enough to be in a place of worship, but I pray you, let not your poverty hinder your receiving the gospel, whose peculiar glory it is that it is preached to the *poor*! You may have nothing at all in this world, not a foot of ground which you can call your own; you may have been fighting against adversity, a deadly struggle, year after year, and yet, you may still be as poor as poverty itself. I will neither commend nor upbraid your poverty, for there is nothing necessarily good or bad morally in any state of life, but I beg that you will not let your circumstances discourage you in the matter of your spiritual interest before God. Come as a beggar if you are a beggar. Come in rags, if you have no other covering. “He who has no money, come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price!”

The expression in the text does not refer merely to social gradations. I have no doubt it has a more spiritual meaning. *The dunghill is a place where men throw their worthless things.* When you have quite done with an article, and cannot put it to any further use, you throw it away. It has been turned to two or three accounts since it was first employed for its original intention, and now it is in the way and can no longer be harbored. It is of no use to be sold even as old metal, and therefore, you throw it on the dunghill that it may be taken away with the rubbish. How often have God's own chosen people felt themselves to be mere refuse and sweepings, good for nothing but to be cast away? You, dear friends, are in a like case, for you have discovered your own utter worthlessness. Looking upon yourself in the light which you have received from heaven, your fancied value has all departed. You were very important once in your own esteem, but you now perceive that your loss, so far

from affecting heaven and earth, would be of no more consequence to the world at large, than the throwing of rotten fruit upon the dunghill, or the falling of a leaf from one forest tree amidst a myriad. In your own estimation there is in you a lack of adaptation for any useful purpose; you are of no more use than salt which has lost its savor. You cannot glorify God as you wish; you do not wish as much as you should. You can neither pray with the earnestness you desire, nor praise with the gratitude you wish to feel. Looking back upon your past life, you are heartily ashamed. In a corner you mourn out, "Lord, what a worthless piece of lumber I have been in this world! What a cumberer of the ground! What an unprofitable servant!" You have been useful to your family, or to your country, and once you thought this enough—but now you measure yourself as in the light of God; and inasmuch as you have never glorified Him who made you, and have brought no honor to Him who is your kind and gracious preserver, you feel yourself to be so worthless, that if the Lord should throw you on the dunghill, and say, "Put him away! He is as worthless as dross and dung," He would only treat you as you richly deserve. My dear friend, this estimate of yourself, though it brings you much unhappiness, is a very healthy sign. When we think little of ourselves, God thinks much of us. "God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble." He will not break you, O you bruised reed! He will not quench you, O you smoking flax! But though you are only fit to be cast on the dunghill, His mercy will tenderly consider you, and exalt you among the princes of His people!

Again, *the dunghill is a place of contempt*. Contempt sometimes sneeringly says of its victim, "He is such a person, that I would not pick him up if I saw him on a dunghill." The sneer of the world condemns some persons thus—"Oh, they are good for nothing; a dunghill is too good for them." Possibly, my hearer,

you may be placed in a family where you are much despised. You may not have the ability and sharpness of others of the household, and therefore you are much looked down upon, and are regarded as a poor simpleton, not worth noticing. You have not succeeded in life as others have done, and consequently, you are viewed with much contempt by those who have prospered much and speedily. You may even feel, this morning, as if you merited the contempt poured upon you. You have been saying, “Ah, you despise me, but if you knew me as I know myself, you would despise me more. You think nothing of me, and I am less than nothing. You call me an ill name, but could you see the deceitfulness of my base heart, you would understand that the name might be worn in truth though given in jest.” Well, despised one, let me remind you that the Lord has often looked upon those whom man has despised; and though your own parents may have taken no pleasure in you, and society may sneer at you, and you may, yourself, now feel as if the sneer were well deserved, yet take confidence and be of good heart, for God visits dunghills when He does not visit palaces, and He will lift up the humble and meek from the dust where they pine and languish.

The next remark may, perhaps, afford more comfort—*the dunghill is the place for filthy and offensive things*. We say of a foul and unsavory thing, “It is too bad to be borne in the house, let it be swept away; put it away with the filth; cover it up.” When a matter becomes noxious, putrid, offensive, we want it to be removed at once. Ah, sad that we should have to say this of any of our fellow creatures, but we must say it. There are some whose sins are terribly foul; their iniquities are so vile, that they are an offense in the eyes and ears of all decent men—and the Holy God looks upon their actions with wrath and detestation. Some sinners have become so infamous in character, that they are an injury to all associated with them; they cannot enter into

any company without spreading the contagion of their sin; their example is so bad, that it is enough to poison the parish where they live. They are only fit to be put as so much rottenness, foulness, and putridity, on the dunghill where immorality rots out its hour of abomination. But, oh, the love of my Master! He has often stooped to rescue the abandoned from the dunghill. In heaven I see those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who once were harlots like Rahab, adulterers like David, and idolaters like Manasseh. Before the throne of God there stand today, among the peers of God, those who, in their days of unregeneracy, were thieves, and drunkards, and blasphemers. Heaven's courts are trod by many who once were the chief of sinners, but who now are brightest among the saints. I pray you, beloved, never think that the gospel of Christ saved great offenders in years gone by, but that now, it is only for the upright and moral! The moral are freely invited to Christ, which we never forget to testify, but the immoral are *welcome* too. The Lord came to our earth as a Physician; and He came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance; He came not to heal those who are already sound in health, but the sick. O my hearer, if you are so sick with sin that your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, and from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet there is no soundness in you—nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores—yet still, the love of my Master will stoop to you!

If you have added lust to theft, and even murder to lust; if you are red-handed with infamous iniquity, yet the sacred crimson bath, which was filled from the heart of Jesus, can wash away “all manner of sin and blasphemy.” Whoever believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Refined minds thought just now, that I was using a very ugly expression when I spoke

of rescuing rottenness from the dunghill, but the expression is all too clean when compared with sin; for all the filth and loathsomeness that ever offended eye and nostril are sweetness itself compared with sin. The foulest and most detestable thing in the whole universe is sin. It is this which keeps the fire of hell burning as God's great sanitary necessity. There cannot but be a constant Tophet where there is such constant sin. We read that in certain French towns they kindled great public fires because of the cholera. The cholera? What is it compared with sin? Well may God cause the fiery flames of eternal torment to go up forever and ever, for it is only by such terrific punishment, that the plague of sin can be at all restrained within bounds. Sin is a horrible evil, a deadly poison; and yet, sinner, though you are as full of it as an egg is full of meat, and as reeking with it as the foulest piece of noxious matter can be reeking with foul smell—yet the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus can lift you from this utmost degradation, and make you shine as a star in His kingdom at the last!

Once more, the dunghill may be spiritually considered as *the place of condemnation*. You look at a certain article of food, for instance, and the economical housewife does not wish to waste anything. Well, if it may not serve for food, may it not be useful for something else? At last, when she sees that it is of no service, the sentence of condemnation is, "Let it be cast on the dunghill." Nebuchadnezzar, in his memorable proclamation concerning the Lord Jehovah, said that whoever should speak a word against Him should be cut in pieces, and his house should be made a dunghill. There is a connection, then, between the dunghill and condemnation. Now there may be in this audience, this morning, a man who feels himself to be under sentence of condemnation. You have so often had pricks of conscience; so frequently have been taught better, and yet you have sinned against light and knowledge, and now you consider yourself to

have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. My voice, this morning, very likely grates on your ears; though it is meant to convey to you the most gladsome tidings that ever silver trumpet rung out to bankrupt sinners on the day of jubilee, yet it sounds to you like the voice which proclaims your doom. Well, poor sinner, if you are, in yourself, condemned, and a hoarse voice has said, "To the dunghill with him! To the flames of hell with him!" yet I come to you in Jehovah's name, and bid you hear this Word of God this morning—"He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes." What do you say to this? What if God should forgive you this morning? What if He should make you His child? What if He should give you a crown of life that fades not away? "Oh," you say, "if He would, I would love and bless Him." Sinner, He will do it if you can now believe in the Lord Jesus, whose blood cleanses us from all sin. By the death of Jesus, I beseech you trust in the atoning sacrifice of Calvary, and you shall live to praise His redeeming love.

I must not, however, leave out a thought which just occurred to me. A thing which lies upon the dunghill *is in contact with disgusting associates*; and, therefore, the text may represent those, who have up to now, lived in the midst of evil associations. When these doors are opened, there often come in here, out of curiosity, persons who are not regular attendants at places of worship—I must say the most hopeful class that I ever address—for some of you who have heard my voice, and the voices of other ministers so long are almost hopeless; we might as well give you up, for we have pleaded with you so frequently, and put the truth of God before you so constantly, that surely if it ever was to have been blessed to you, it would have been blessed already. But those to whom the gospel is a new thing occasionally drop in, and some of these come from the very worst society, fresh from the theater, the gin palace,

and worse places still—the name of Jesus scarcely known, except as it may be used in blasphemy, and the person never thought of God Most High, except as He is invoked in a curse. Friend, we are glad that you are here! You have been on the dunghill, you are on the dunghill now; you have been living with publicans and harlots; you have kept bad company; you have not been nurtured among the choice and the elite of mankind, on the contrary, you have been among the pots and dwelt in the hedges. Now it is such as you are, that Jesus Christ bids us gather in. “Go out quickly into the lanes, and into the hedges, and as many as you find bid to the supper.” And they brought in the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and they took their seats and feasted where others who were first invited refused to come! I call to you, then, if such there are within my hearing, to you who do not often darken the doors of God’s sanctuary, to you who live among the profane and the debauched, turn to Jesus Christ, I pray you! May the eternal Spirit turn you this day, and may you be found among the chosen of God! Alas, and woe is me that I should have to say it, some of you, my hearers, who have been moral and excellent, and have listened to the word these years, will, I solemnly fear, perish in your sins; for verily, verily, I say unto you, publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of heaven before some of you who hear the word, but do it not, and listen to it, but feel not its power, and know the joyful sound, but do not receive it into your hearts.

Thus much, then, as to where some of God’s people are found. Let me say that in a certain sense this is where they all are—all on the dunghill of Adam’s fall, all on the dunghill of self-conceit, selfrighteousness, and depravity, and sin, and corruption; but sovereign mercy comes to them just as they lie there rotting in heaps of ruin, and rescues them by effectual grace.

## II. In the second place, we desire to describe **HOW THE LORD RAISES THEM FROM IT.**

He lifts the needy out of the dunghill. It is a dead lift, and none but an eternal arm could do it. It is a feat of omnipotence to lift a sinner out of his natural degradation; it is all done by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word, filled with the energy of God. The operation is somewhat on this wise. When the Lord begins to deal with the needy sinner, the first lift He gives him *raises his desires*. The man is not satisfied to be where he was, and what he was. That dunghill he had not perceived to be as foul as it really is; and the first sign of spiritual life is horror at his lost condition, and an anxious desire to escape from it. Dear hearer, have you advanced as far as this? Do you feel that all is wrong with you? And do you desire to be saved from your present state? So long as you can say, "It is well with me," and boast that you are no worse than others, I have no hope for you. God does not lift those up who are lifted up already! But when you begin to feel that your present state is one of degradation and ruin, and that you desire to escape from it, then the Lord has put the lever under you! He has begun to raise you up. The next sign generally is that to *such a man sin loses all sweetness*. When the Lord begins to work with you, even before you find Christ to the joy of your soul, you will find the joy of sin to have departed. A quickened soul that feels the weight of sin cannot find pleasure in it. Although, without faith in Jesus, the evil of sin cannot clearly and evangelically be perceived, yet the conscience of an awakened sinner, perceiving the terribly defiling character of some sins, compels him to give them up. The alehouse is abandoned; the scorner's seat is given up; the lusts of the flesh are forsaken, and though this does not lift the sinner from the dunghill, yet it is a sign, that the Lord has begun His work of grace. When sin grows bitter, mercy grows sweet. O, my friend, may the Lord wean you from the



world's sweet poisons, and bring you to the true pleasures which are hidden in Christ Jesus! It is another blessed sign that the man is being lifted from the dunghill when he begins to feel that *his own self-righteousness is no assistance to him*—when, having prayed, he looks upon his prayers with repentance, and having gone to God's house, rests not in the outward form. It is well when a man is cut off entirely from all confidence in himself. He may still be on the dunghill, but I am sure he will not be there long, for when you and yourself have quarreled, God and yourself begin to be at peace; when you can see through that cobweb righteousness of yours, which once seemed to be such a fair silken garment; when you can hate that counterfeit coin which once seemed to glitter and to chink like true gold; when you are plunged in the ditch, and your own clothes abhor you, it is not long before you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation!

Now comes the true lift from off the dunghill. That poor, guilty, lost, worthless one, *bears of Jesus Christ*, that He came into the world to save sinners—that poor soul looks to Him with a look which means, “Lord, You are my last resort! If You do not save me, I will perish; and You must save me altogether, for I cannot help You. I cannot give a thread with which to finish Your perfect righteousness. If it is unfinished, I cannot contribute one farthing to make up my own ransom—if You have not completely ransomed me, then Your redemption is of no service to me. Lord, I am a drowning, sinking man; I grasp You as I sink; O save me for Your mercy's sake!”—

“All my help on You is stayed.  
All my trust from You I bring.  
Cover my defenseless head  
With the shadow of Your wing.”

When a soul gets there, then it is off the dunghill, for the moment a sinner thus trusts Jesus Christ, his sins cease to be! God has drawn His pen through them all; they are gone. He is not guilty in the sight of God any longer; he stands acquitted through the atonement, and justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is a saved man. He may rise from his sackcloth and ashes, and walking at large, may sing of the blood-bought mercy which has set him completely free. Thus, by the gift of the onlybegotten Son, brought personally to the heart, the Lord raises His elect ones from their ruined state; He makes them see it to be a dunghill; makes them feel that they cannot get off of it themselves; points them to Christ; leads them to trust His precious blood, and so they are delivered.

**III. The third point is, HOW HE RAISES THEM UP.**

It is a blessed thing to be saved from degradation, but praise be to Jehovah, He does not stop there. The Lord does nothing by halves. Oh, the lengths and breadths of love! When He has come right down to where we are, it is only half His journey—it remains for Him to bear us right up to where He is. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be taken off the dunghill, even if our lot were that of hired servants in our father's house; but this does not satisfy the infinite heart of Jehovah—He will lift His people up above all commonplace joys, he will take them right up, up, up as on eagles' wings, till He sets them in the place of princes, and makes them to reign with Him!

Now, let us have a few minutes' consideration of how our blessed Lord lifts His people up from the common level of humanity to make them rank with princes. In the first place, *they are lifted up by complete justification*. Every Christian here this morning, whatever may have been his past life, is at this instant perfect in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. The spotless righteousness of Christ is imputed to that sinner believing in Him, so that he stands, this morning, "accepted in the Beloved."

Now beloved, weigh this, turn it over, and meditate upon it. Poor, needy, but believing sinner, you are as accepted before God at this present time through Christ Jesus, as if you had never sinned, as if you had done and performed every work of His most righteous law, without the slightest failure. Is not this sitting among princes? Complete justification furnishes the believer with a throne as safe as it is lofty, as happy as it is glorious. Ah, you descendants of imperial houses, some of you know nothing of this. This is a note which many an emperor could never sing, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?” Speak of sitting in pavilions of pleasure, or on couches of state with nobles, princes, kings, Caesars—why the figure flags, it falls short of the mark, for the state of the soul completely justified, outshines all this as the sun outshines yon glimmering candle.

Take the next step. The children of God who have been taken from the dunghill, many of them, enjoy *full assurance of faith*. They are certain that they are saved; they can say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” As to whether they are children of God or not, they have no question; the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are born of God. Christ is their elder Brother, God is their Father, and they breathe the filial spirit by which they cry, “Abba, Father!” They know their own security; they are convinced that neither “things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.” I ask every one of understanding heart, whether this is not sitting among princes? Beloved, I would not give a farthing for a prince’s throne, but I would give all I had a thousand times told, if I might always enjoy full assurance of faith! The full assurance of faith is a better joy than Shushan’s

palace of lilies, or Solomon's house of the forest of Lebanon could ever yield. A sense of divine loving kindness is better than life itself—it is a young heaven maturing below to be fully developed above. To know that my Beloved is mine, and that I am His and that He loved me and gave Himself for me, this is far better than to be heir-apparent to a number of empires!

We go further, the children of God favored by divine grace, are permitted to have *interviews with Jesus Christ*. Like Enoch, we walk with God. Just as a child walks with his father, putting his hand into his father's hand, looking up with loving eyes, so the chosen people walk with their Father God most lovingly, confidingly, familiarly, talking to Him, telling Him their griefs, and hearing from His gracious mouth the secrets of His Love. They are a happy people, for they have communion with Jesus of a more intimate and tender sort than even angels know. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; we are married unto Him; He has betrothed us unto Himself in faithfulness and in righteousness; we are dearer to Himself than His own flesh and blood—that He gave to die—and none of us shall ever perish, neither shall any take us out of His hand. Now, is not this sitting among princes? Princes? Princes? We look down upon your pomp from the eminence on which grace has placed us! Wear your crowns! Put on your purple! Deck yourselves in all your regal pomp, but when our souls can sit with Jesus, and reign as kings and priests, with Him, your splendors are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in any imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the crowns of earth.

Nor is this all—the elect of God, in addition to receiving complete justification, full assurance and communion with Christ, are favored with the Holy Spirit's *sanctification*. God the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian; however humble he may

be, he is a walking temple in which resides Deity. God the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and we in Him; and that Spirit sanctifies the daily actions of the Christian, so that he does everything as unto God; if he lives, it is to Christ, and if he dies, it is gain. O beloved, it is, indeed, to sit among princes when you feel the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. O, my God, if I might always feel Your Spirit, overcoming my corruption and compelling my soul to holiness, I would not so much as think of a prince, in comparison with my own joy. O my dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, I am sure you can bear witness that when you fall into sin at any time, it brings you very low; you smell that vile dunghill once again, and are ready to die under its fearful stench; but when the Holy Spirit enables you to overcome sin, and to live as Christ lived, you feel that you have a royal standing, and a more than imperial privilege in being sanctified in Christ Jesus!

Moreover, many saints receive, in addition to sanctification, *the blessing of usefulness*; and, mark the word, every useful man is of princely rank. I am not exaggerating now, but speaking the sober truth; he is the true prince among men who blesses his fellows. To be able to drop pearls from your lips might make you a prince in a fairy tale, but when those lips bless the souls of men by leading them to Jesus— this is to be a prince in very deed! To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to reclaim the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to cheer the desponding, to inspire the wavering, and to conduct saints up to God's right hand, my brethren, this is to wear a luster which stars and ribbons, orders and distinctions, could never confer. This is the privilege of each one of you, according as the Spirit of God has given you the measure of faith. You, who once did mischief, now subserve the interest of virtue; you, who rendered up your members servants unto unrighteousness, now make those same members servants of righteousness, to the praise and glory of

God. No courts of sovereigns can bestow such true honors as dwell in holiness, charity, and zeal.

And once more, God lifts His people up in another sense—while He gives them sanctification and usefulness, He also *anoints them with joy*. Oh, the joy of being a Christian! I know the world's idea is that we are a miserable people. If you read the pages of history, the writers speak of the gay cavaliers as being men of high spirit and overflowing joy; but the poor Puritans, what a wretched set they were, blaspheming Christmas Day, abhorring games and sports, and going about the world looking so terribly miserable, that it were a pity they should go to hell, for they had enough of torment here! Now this talk is all untrue, or at best is a gross caricature! Hypocrites, then as now, did wear a long face, and a rueful countenance, but there were to be found among the Puritans hosts of men whose holy mirth and joy were not to be equaled, no, not to be dreamed of, or understood by those poor grinning fools, who fluttered around the heartless rogue whose hypocrisies had lifted him to the English throne. The cavaliers' mirth was the crackling of thorns under a pot, but a deep and unquenchable joy dwelt in the breasts of those men—

“Who trampled on the throng  
of the haughty and the strong,  
Who sat in the high places,  
and slew the saints of God.”

Oh, far above the laughter of the gallants of the court, was the mighty and deep joy of those who rode from the victorious field, singing unto the Lord who had made them triumph gloriously! They called them, “Ironsides,” and such they were, but they had hearts of steel, which while they flinched not in the day of danger, forgot not to flash with joy, even as steel

glitters in the shining of the sun. Believe me, however, whatever *they* were, we who trust in Jesus are the happiest of people—not constitutionally, for some of us have great depression of spirits; Not always circumstantially, for some of us are much tried, and are brought to the utter depths of poverty, but inwardly, truly, really, our heart's joy, believe us, is not to be excelled. I would not stand here to lie for twice the Indies, but I will speak the truth—if I had to die like a dog tomorrow, I would not change places with any man beneath the courts of heaven for joy and peace of mind, for to be a Christian, and know it, to drink deep of that cup, to know your election, to understand your calling—I assure you yields more peace and bliss in ten minutes, than will be found in 100 years in all the courts of sin, though wantonness should run riot, and pleasure should know no license—

“Solid joy and lasting pleasure  
None but Zion's children know.”

So when I read the text that He sets us among princes, I think little of the figure, it halts, it limps, for the Lord puts us far above all earthly princes; and were it not for the next sentence I would even say that the figure broke down altogether, but that clause makes it right, “even the princes of His people”—this puts soul and force—these are princes of another blood, these are peers of another realm, and among such God sets His people.

**IV.** To conclude, we have to notice in the last place, **WHERE IT IS THAT OUR LORD SETS HIS PEOPLE.**

“Among princes,” we are told. We have already dwelt upon the same thought, but we will examine another side of it. “Among princes,” *is the place of select society*. They do not admit everybody into that charmed circle. Among an aristocracy the

poor plebeian must not venture. The blue blood runs in rather a narrow channel, and it cannot be expected that the common crimson should be allowed to invigorate the flagging current. The true Christian lives in very select society. Listen! "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Speak of select society, there is none like this! We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood. "We are not come unto Mount Sinai, but we are come unto the blood of sprinkling, and unto the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." This is select society. Next, *they have courtly audience*—the prince may be expected to have admittance to royalty, when common people like ourselves, must stand afar off. Now, the child of God has free access to the royalty of heaven. Our courtly privileges are of the highest order. Listen! "For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father." "Let us come boldly," says the Apostle, "to the throne of the heavenly grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We have courtly audience and peculiarly select society.

Next to this, it is supposed that among princes there is *abundant wealth*, but what is the wealth of princes compared with the riches of believers? For "all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Among princes, again, there dwells *peculiar power*. A prince has influence; he wields a scepter in his own domain—and, "He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever." We are not kings of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and yet we have a triple dominion; we reign over spirit, soul and body. We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity; we reign in this world, and we shall reign in the world that is yet to come—for we shall reign forever and ever. Princes, again, have *special honor*.



Everyone in the crowd desires to gaze upon a prince, and would be delighted to do him service. Let *him* have the first position in the empire; he is a prince of the blood, and is to be had in esteem and respect.

Beloved, hear His Word—“He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” so that we share the honor of Christ as we share His cross. Paul was taken from the dunghill of persecution, but he is not second to any in glory; and you, though you may have been the chief of sinners, shall fare none the worse when He comes in His kingdom; but as He acknowledged you on earth, and redeemed you with His precious blood, so will He acknowledge you in the future state, and make you sit with Him and reign among princes, world without end. May the Lord bless these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 113.***

A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”  
— Luke 2:25

WHAT A BIOGRAPHY of a man! How short and yet how complete! We have seen biographies so wordy, that full one half is nonsense, and much of the other half too dull to be worth reading. We have seen large volumes spun out of men's letters. Writing desks have been broken open, and private diaries exposed to the world. Nowadays, if a man is a little celebrated, his signature, the house in which he was born, the place where he dines, and everything else is thought worthy of public notice. As soon as he is departed this life, he is embalmed in huge folios, the profit of which rests mainly, I believe, with the publishers, and not with the readers. Short biographies, which give a concise and exact account of the whole man, are the best. What do we care about what Simeon did—where he was born, where he was married, what street he used to walk through, or what colored coat he wore? We have a very concise account of his history, and that is enough. His “name was Simeon,” he lived “in Jerusalem,” “the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”

Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of us—our name—our business, “waiting for the Consolation of Israel,” our character, “just and devout;”—our companionship, having the Holy Spirit upon us—that will be sufficient to hand us down, not to time, but to eternity, memorable among the just, and estimable among all them who are sanctified!

Pause awhile, I beseech you, and contemplate Simeon's character. The Holy Spirit thought it worthy of notice, since He put a, “behold,” in the sentence. “*Behold*, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.” He does not say, “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was King Herod.” He does not say, “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem who was High Priest,” but, “Behold!”—turn aside here, for the sight is so rare, you may never see such a thing again as long as you live. Here is a perfect marvel—“Behold,” there was one man in Jerusalem who was “just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” His character is summed up in two words— “just and devout.” “Just”—that is his character before men. “Devout”—that is his character before God. He was “*just*.” Was he a father? He did not provoke his children to anger, lest they should be discouraged. Was he a master? He gave unto his servants that which was just and equal, knowing that he also had his Master in heaven. Was he a citizen? He rendered obedience unto the powers that then were, submitting himself to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. Was he a merchant? He overreached in no transaction, but providing things honest in the sight of all men, he honored God in his common business habits. Was he a servant? Then he did not render eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart he served the Lord.

If, as is very probable, he was one of the teachers of the Jews, then he was faithful; he spoke what he knew to be the

Word of God, although it might not be for his gain, and he would not, like the other shepherds, turn aside to speak error for the sake of filthy lucre. Before men he was just. But that is only half a good man's character. There are many who say, "I am just and upright; I never robbed a man in my life; I pay 20 shillings in the pound; and if anybody can find fault with my character, let him speak. Am I not just?" But as for their religion, such a one will say, "I do not care about it; I think religion is hypocritical." Sir, you have only one feature of a good man, and that the smaller. You do good towards man, but not towards God; you do not rob your fellow, but you rob your Maker. "Will a man rob God?" Yes, and think far less of it than he would if he robbed man. He who robs man is called a villain; he who robs God is often called a gentleman. Simeon had both features of a Christian. He was a "just man," and he was also "*devout*." Mark, it does not say he was a just man and religious. A man may be very religious, and yet he may not be devout. Religion, you know, as the term is used, consists very much in outward observances; godliness and devotion consist in the inward life and action arising from the inner spring of true consecration. It does not say here that Simeon was a religious man, for that he might have been, and yet have been a Pharisee, a hypocrite, a mere professor. But no, he was a "devout" man. He valued the "outward and visible sign," but he possessed the "inward and spiritual grace." Therefore, he is called "a just man and devout." "Behold!" says the Holy Spirit! "Behold!" for it is a rarity! Come here, you Christians of the present day! Many of you are just, but you are not devout; and some of you pretend to be devout, but you are not just; the just and the devout together make up the perfection of the godly man. Simeon was "a just man and devout."

But now, leaving the character of Simeon as a man, we shall endeavor to expound his blessed hope as a believer. To this end

we ask your attention, first, to *the expectation*—he was “waiting for the Consolation of Israel.” Secondly, *the fulfillment*—that which he waited for, he saw; and when he found Jesus, he said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace.” And thirdly, *the explanation of that fulfillment*, or how it is that the Lord Jesus is the Consolation of Israel.

I. First, then, **SIMEON’S EXPECTATION**. He was “waiting for the Consolation of Israel.” This was the position of all the saints of God, from the first promise, even to the time of Simeon. Poor old Simeon had now become gray-headed; it is very possible that he had passed the usual period allotted to man’s life, but he did not wish to die; he wished for “the Consolation of Israel.” He did not wish that the tabernacle of his body might be dissolved, but he did hope that through the chinks of that old battered tabernacle of his, he might be able to see the Lord. Like the hoary-headed Christian of our times, he did not desire to die, but he did desire to “be with Christ, which was far better.” All the saints have waited for Jesus. Our mother Eve waited for the coming of Christ; when her first son was born, she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord.” True she was mistaken in what she said—it was Cain, and not Jesus. But by her mistake, we see that she cherished the blessed hope. That Hebrew patriarch who took his son, his only son, to offer him for a burnt offering, expected the Messiah, and well did he express his faith when he said, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.” He who once had a stone for his pillow, the trees for his curtains, the heaven for his canopy, and the cold ground for his bed, expected the coming of Jesus, for he said on his deathbed—“Until Shiloh comes.” The Lawgiver of Israel who was “king in Jeshurun,” spoke of him, for Moses said, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: Him shall you hear.” David celebrated Him in many a prophetic song—the Anointed of

God, the King of Israel; Him to whom all kings shall bow, and all nations call Him blessed.” How frequently does he in his Psalms sing about “my Lord”? “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

But need we stop to tell you of Isaiah, who spoke of His passion, and “saw His glory”? Or of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Malachi, and of all the rest of the prophets who stood with their eyes strained, looking through the dim mists of futurity, until the weeks of prophecy should be fulfilled—until the sacred day should arrive, when Jesus Christ should come in the flesh? They were all waiting for the Consolation of Israel! And, now, good old Simeon, standing on the verge of the period when Christ would come—with expectant eyes looked out for Him. Every morning, he went up to the temple, saying to himself, “Perhaps He will come today.” Each night, when he went home, he bent his knee and said, “O Lord, come quickly! Even so, come quickly!” And yet, that morning he went to the temple, little thinking, perhaps, the hour was at hand when he would see his Lord there; but there He was, brought in the arms of His mother, a little Baby; and Simeon knew Him. “Lord,” he said, “now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your Salvation.” “Oh,” cries one, “but we cannot wait for the Savior now!” No, beloved, in one sense we cannot, for He is come already. The poor Jews are waiting for Him. They will wait in vain now for His first coming, that having passed already. Waiting for the Messiah was a virtue in Simeon’s day—it is the unbelief of the Jews now, since the Messiah is come. Still, there is a high sense in which the Christian ought to be every day waiting for the Consolation of Israel. I am very pleased to see that the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is gaining ground everywhere. I find that the most spiritual men in every

place are “looking for,” as well as “hastening unto,” the coming of our Lord and Savior. I marvel that the belief is not universal, for it is so perfectly scriptural. We are, we trust, some of us, in the same posture as Simeon. We have climbed the staircase of the Christian virtues from where we look for that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Besides, if we do not believe in the second coming, every Christian waits for the Consolation of Israel at times when he misses the sweet consoling experience. I speak to some of you, perhaps, who are feeling that you have lost the light of the Lord's face lately. You have not seen His blessed countenance; you have not heard His love-speaking voice; you have not listened to the tender accents of His lips, and you are longing for Him. You are like Simeon, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. He will come; though He tarries, He will come. Christ does not leave His people entirely. Though He hides His face, He will come again. The child says the swallows are dead, because they skim the purple sea. Wait, O child, and the swallows shall come back again. The foolish one thinks that the sun has died out because he is hidden behind the clouds. Stop for a little season, and the sun shall come again, and you shall know that he was brewing behind dark clouds the April shower, mother to the sweet May flowers. Jesus is gone for a little while; but He will come again. Christian! Be waiting for the Consolation of Israel!

I hope, too, I have in this place some poor seeking sinner who is waiting for the same Consolation. Sinner, you will not have to wait forever! It is very seldom Christ Jesus keeps poor sinners waiting long. Sometimes He does. He answers them not a word, but then it is to try their faith. Though He keeps them waiting, He will not send them away empty; sooner or later He will be sure to give them mercies. “Though the promise tarries, wait for it,” and you shall find it yet, to your soul's salvation.

Child of God, has not your Father come to you yet? Cry for Him! Cry for Him! Your Father will come. Nothing fetches the parent to the child, like the child's cry. Cry, little one, cry, you who have but little faith. "Ah, but," you say, "I am too weak to cry." Did you ever notice that the little one sometimes cries so very low that when you are sitting in the parlor with its mother, you do not hear it? Up she goes! There is the dear child crying upstairs. And off she goes! *She* can hear it, though *you* cannot—because it is her child who cries. Cry, little one, let your prayers go up to heaven. Though your minister does not hear it; though unbelief says no one can hear it, there is a God in heaven who knows the cry of the penitent. He "heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Sweet posture! To be waiting for the Consolation of Israel!

**II.** This brings us to the second point—**THE FULFILMENT OF THIS EXPECTATION.** Did Simeon wait in vain? Ah, no; he waited for Consolation, and he had The Consolation for which he waited. Oh, I can picture Simeon's disposition! How altered it was that morning! He went, probably, an old man limping up to the temple, his face sad with disappointment, his eyes dark with distress, because he had not found that for which he looked. He wanted to see, and could not see; he desired to know, and he did not know. Sometimes, in his unbelieving moments, he thought that, like the prophets and kings, he should wait long and seek, but never find. Do you not think you see him, when he held the Baby in his arms? Why, the old man did not then need his staff to lean on; down it went, and both his arms grasped the Child! He may have trembled a little, but the mother of Jesus was not afraid to trust her Child to him. How young he felt! As young as when ten years ago he walked with light steps through the streets of Jerusalem. Scarcely in heaven did old Simeon feel happier than he did at that moment when he clasped the Baby in his arms!



Do you not think you see him? Joy is flashing from his eyes; his lips speak sonnets which burst out like the chorus of immortals, when he says, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

Ask now. Was he disappointed in the object of his search? Was Jesus equal to his expectations, “the Consolation of Israel”? We answer, Yes. We dare any person here, or in the wide world, to deny what we now assert—there is certainly sweet and blessed Consolation in Jesus for all the people of God. I do not know whether any have ever been fools enough to say the gospel is not comforting. I do not think they have. Most of them have said, “It is a very good religion for old women and imbeciles, for sick people—those on deathbeds.” The worst of men admit that religion is a very comfortable thing, or if they do not admit it, they have the lesson to learn. Come, deist or skeptic, whichever you are, let me point you to believers in the time of persecution. Look upon that face of Stephen, already lighted up with heaven’s own glory while they are stoning him. Let me bring you down through the ages of the rack, and the wheel, the times of stocks and inquisitions. Let me tell you of martyrs who clapped their hands in the flames, and while their limbs were burning at the stake could yet sing a carol, as if it were Christmas day in their hearts, though it was ash day to their bodies. How often you find those who are foremost in suffering, foremost in joy! When men laid iron chains on their arms, God put golden chains of honor on their necks. When men heaped reproaches on their names, God heaped comforts on their souls. The peace cry, like the blood cry, let it never be hushed. The Christian race, by our martyrs and confessors, show the wide, wide world that there is a joy in religion that can quench the flame, snatch torture from the rack, the torment from the wheel, that can sing in prison, can laugh cheerfully in the stocks, and make our free and unimprisoned hearts burst

through the bars of the dungeon, and fly upwards, chanting Psalms to our God. Behold the Consolation of Israel!

But the infidel replies, “These are excitable moments. At such times, persons are stimulated beyond their natural strength. Your examples are not fair.” Come here, unbeliever, and let me show you Christians in ordinary life—not martyrs, not confessors, not men with blood-red crowns on their brows—but common men like yourself. See that husband? He has just returned from the funeral of his wife. Do you mark his countenance? He says, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” Could you do that? See that mother? Her child lies dead. And looking on it, she says, “He has done all things well; it is hard to part with him, but I will resign him to my God.” Could you do that, infidel? See yonder merchant? Ruin has overtaken him—he is reduced to poverty. Mark how he lifts his hands to heaven, and cries, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Could you do the same, infidel? No, you could not; but there is Consolation in Jesus Christ. I am half ashamed of some of you, my brethren, who do not bear trouble well, because you are not an honor to your religion as you ought to be. You should learn, if possible, to say, like Job—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “Alas,” you say, “it is easy enough for you to tell us so, but not quite so easy to practice.” I grant you that; but then it is the glory of the gospel that makes us do things that are not easy. If it is a hard thing, so much the more honor to God—so much the more virtue in the Scriptures—that by their blessed influence, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, they enable us to bear trials under which others sink.

But a little while ago I heard of an ungodly man who had a pious wife. They had but one daughter, a fair and lovely thing; she was laid on a bed of sickness—the father and mother stood beside the bed; the solemn moment came when she must die. The father leaned over, and put his arm round her, and wept hot tears upon his child's white brow; the mother stood there too, weeping her very soul away. The moment that child was dead, the father began to tear his hair, and curse himself in his despair; misery had got hold upon him; but as he looked towards the foot of the bed, there stood his wife; she was not raving, she was not cursing. She wiped her eyes, and said, "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me." The unbeliever's heart for a moment rose in anger, for he imagined that she was a stoic. But the tears flowed down her cheeks, too. He saw that though she was a weak and feeble woman, she could bear sorrow better than he could, and he threw his arms around her neck, and said, "Ah, wife, I have often laughed at your religion; I will do so no more! There is much blessedness in this resignation; would God that I had it, too!" "Yes," she might have answered, "I have the Consolation of Israel." There is—hear it, you despisers, and wonder, and perish—there is Consolation in Jesus Christ!

That dear sister, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this service, was one of the noblest pictures of resignation I have ever seen. When I went to see her, I could only describe her position like this—she was sitting on the banks of the Jordan, singing, with her feet in the water, longing to cross the river. "Ah, Pastor," she said, when I came in, "How you have fed my soul, and made my young days come over again; I did not think the Lord would give me such blessed seasons just before He took me home; but now I must bid you good-bye, for I am going up to my Jesus, and I shall be with Him forever." I shall not forget how calm she looked. Ah, it is sweet to see a

Christian die! It is the noblest thing on earth—the dismissal of a saint from his labor to his reward, from his conflicts to his triumphs. The gorgeous pageantry of princes is as nothing. The glory of the setting sun is not to be compared with the heavenly light which illuminates the soul as it fades from the organs of bodily sense, to be ushered into the august presence of the Lord. When dear Haliburton died, he said, “I am afraid I shall not be able to bear another testimony to my Master, but in order to show you that I am peaceful, and still resting on Christ, I will hold my hands up.” And just before he died, he held both his hands up, and clapped them together, though he could not speak. Have you ever read of the deathbed of Payson? I cannot describe it to you; it was like the flight of a seraph. John Knox, that brave old fellow, when he came to die, sat up in his bed, and said, “Now the hour of my dissolution is come; I have longed for it many a day; and I shall be with my Lord in a few moments.” Then he fell back on his bed and died.

We have many others of whom I might tell you; such as that blessed Janeway, who said, “O that I had lips to tell you a thousandth part of that which I now feel; you will never know the worth of Jesus till you come to your deathbed, and then you will find Him a blessed Christ, when you need Him most.” O unbeliever, stand where death is at work; and if you love not the righteous in their life, you will say, none the less, like Balaam, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” Such is our holy religion—a sweet and blessed Consolation!

**III.** And this brings us to the third point which is **THE EXPLANATION OF THIS FACT**—to show to all men, and to show to you, especially, that there is Consolation, and to explain how it is.

In the first place, there is Consolation in the *doctrines of the Bible*. I like a doctrinal religion. I do not believe in the statement

of some people that they have no creed. A man says, for instance, "I am not a Calvinist, and I am not an Arminian, I am not a Baptist, I am not a Presbyterian, I am not an Independent." He says he is liberal. But this is only the license he claims for his own habit of disagreeing with everybody. He is one of that sort of people whom we generally find to be the most bigoted and least tolerant of others. He follows himself, and so belongs to the smallest denomination in the world. I do not believe that charity consists in giving up our denominational distinctions. I think there is a "more excellent way." Even those who despise not faith, though they almost sacrifice it to their benevolence, will sometimes say, "Well, I don't belong to any of your sects and parties." There was a body of men once, who came out from all branches of the Christian Church with the hope that everybody else of true heart would follow them. The result, however, has been that they have only made another denomination, distinct alike in doctrine and discipline. I believe in creeds if they are based on Scripture. They may not secure unity of sentiment, but on the whole they promote it, for they serve as landmarks, and show us the points at which many turn aside. Every man must have a creed if he believes anything. The greater certainty he feels that it is true, the greater his own satisfaction. In doubts, darkness, and distrust, there can be no Consolation. The vague fancies of the skeptic, as he muses over images and apprehensions too shapeless and airy to be incorporated into any creed, may please for a while, but it is the pleasure of a dream. I believe that there is Consolation for Israel in the *substance* of faith, and the *evidence* of things not seen. *Ideas* are too airy to lay hold of. The anchor we have is sure and steadfast. I thank God that the faith I have received can be molded into a creed, and can be explained with words so simple that the common people can understand it, and be comforted by it.

Then, look at the doctrines themselves—the doctrines of the Bible. What well-springs of Consolation they are! How consolatory the doctrine of *election* to the Israel of God! To some men it is repulsive. But show me the gracious soul that has come to put his trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. “Chosen in Christ,” will be a sweet stanza in his song of praise! To think that, before the hills were formed, or the channels of the sea were scooped out, God loved me; that from everlasting to everlasting, His mercy is upon His people. Is not that a Consolation? You who do not believe in election, go and fish in other waters; but in this great sea, there are mighty fishes. If you could come here, you would find rich Consolation. Or come again to the sweet doctrine of *redemption*. What Consolation is there, beloved, to know that you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Not the mock redemption taught by some people, which pretends that the ransom is paid, but the souls that are ransomed may, notwithstanding, be lost. No, no; a positive redemption which is effectual for all those for whom it is made. Oh, to think that Christ has so purchased you with His blood, that you cannot be lost. Is there not Consolation in that doctrine—the doctrine of redemption? Think, again, of the doctrine of *atonement*—that Christ Jesus has borne all your sins in His own body on the cross; that He has put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself. There is nothing like believing in full atonement—that all our sins are washed away and carried into the depths of the sea. Is there not Consolation there? What do you say, worldling, if you could know yourself to be elect of God the Father? If you could believe yourself redeemed by His only begotten Son? If you knew that for your sins there was a complete ransom paid—would not that be a Consolation to you? Perhaps you answer, “No.” That is because you are a natural man, and do not discern spiritual things. The spiritual man will reply,

“Consolation? Yes, sweet as honey to these lips; yes, sweeter than the honeycomb to my heart are those precious doctrines of the grace of God.”

Let us pass on to *consolatory promises*.

Oh, how sweet to the soul in distress are the promises of Jesus! For every condition, there is a promise; for every sorrow, there is a cordial; for every wound, there is a balm; for every disease, there is a medicine. If we turn to the Bible, there are promises for all cases. Now, let me appeal to you, my friends. Have you not felt how consoling the promises are to you in seasons of adversity and hours of anguish? Do you not remember some occasion, when your spirits were so broken down that you felt as if you never could have struggled through your woes and sorrows, had not some sweet and precious Word of God come to your help? Minister of the gospel, do you not remember how often you have feared that your message would be of no effect? But you have heard your Master whisper, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Sunday school teacher, have not you said, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing”? And have you not then heard Jesus say, “My Word shall not return unto Me void”? Mourner, you have lost a near relation, have you not heard Jesus then say, “All things work together for good”? Softly wipe that tear away, O widow—would not your heart have broken if it had not been for the assurance, “Your Maker is your husband”? Fatherless child, what would have become of you if you had not turned to the consoling promise, “Leave your fatherless children, and let your widows trust in Me”? But why need I tell you, Christian, that there are consoling promises in the Bible? You know there are. I would not sell a leaf of the Bible for a world, nor would I change a promise of it for stars made of gold—

“Holy Bible, book divine,  
Precious treasure! You are mine.”

No such comfort can I find as what I derive from you! You are heaven on earth to me, blessed Bible! Verily, if we wait for Christ, we shall find that in His gospel there is Consolation for Israel.

Not only have we consolatory promises, and consolatory doctrines, but we have *consolatory influences* in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are times, my friends, when all the promises in the world are of no use to us—when all the doctrines in the world would be of no use unless we had a hand to apply them to us. There lies a poor man; he has been wounded in battle. In yonder hospital, there is a bundle of liniment. The blood is flowing; he has lost an arm; he has lost a leg. There are plenty at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and plenty of medicines for all that he now suffers. But what use are they? He may lie forlorn on the battlefield and die unless there is someone to bring the ambulance to carry him to the place—he cannot reach it himself. He lifts himself up on that one remaining arm, but he falls down faint; the blood is flowing freely, and his strength is ebbing with it. Oh, then it is not the liniment he cares for; it is not the ointment—it is someone who can bring those things to him! Yes, and if the remedies were all put there by his side, it may be, he is so faint and sick that he can do nothing for his own relief. Now, in the Christian religion, there is something more than prescriptions for our comfort. There is one, even the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to us. Think not that Christ has merely put joys within our reach that we may get for ourselves, but He comes and puts the joys inside our hearts. The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim, not only finds there is something to strengthen him to walk, but he is borne on eagles’ wings. Christ



does not merely help him to walk, but carries him, and says, “I will bind up your wounds; I will come to you Myself.”

O poor soul, is not this joy for you? You have been often told by your minister to believe in Christ, but you say you cannot. You have often been invited to come to Jesus, but you feel you cannot come. Yes, but the best of the gospel is, that when a sinner *cannot come* to Christ, Christ can come to him! When the poor soul feels that it cannot get near Christ, Christ will be sure to draw him. O Christian, if you are, tonight, laboring under deep distresses, your Father does not give you promises, and then leave you. The promises He has written in the Word, He will engrave on your heart; He will manifest His love to you, and by His blessed Spirit, which blows like the wind, take away your cares and troubles. Be it known unto you, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eyes of His people. I shall never forget hearing John Gough say, in his glowing manner—“Wipe away tears? That is *God's* prerogative; and yet,” said he, “I have done it. When the drunkard has been reclaimed, the tears of a wife have been wiped from her cheeks.” O beloved, it is a blessed thing to wipe others' tears away; but “Lo, these things works God oftentimes with men.” He not only gives you the handkerchief, but wipes your eyes for you; He not only gives you the sweet wine, but holds it to your lips and pours it into your mouth. The good Samaritan did not say, “Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you,” but what did he do? He poured in the oil and the wine. He did not say, “Now, mount the beast”—but he set him on it, and took him to the inn. Glorious gospel, that provides such things for poor lost ones—comes after us when we cannot come after it—brings us grace when we cannot win grace—here is grace in the giving as well as the gift. Happy people, to be thus blessed of God! Simeon “waited for the Consolation of Israel,” and he found it. May you find it too!

Two short addresses to two sorts of people; and then we shall be done. To you, you followers of Jesus, let me speak. I have one thing to ask of you. With such a Father who loves you—with such a Savior who has given Himself for you, and does give Himself to you—with such a good Spirit to abide with you, instruct you, and comfort you—with such a gospel—what now bows you down? What is meant by those wrinkled brows? What is meant by those flowing tears? What is meant by those aching hearts? What is meant by that melancholy carriage? “What do they mean?” you say; “Why, I have troubles.” But, brother, have you forgotten the exhortation of the Lord? “Cast your burden on the Lord; He will sustain you,” “He shall never allow the righteous to be moved.” Do, brethren, do try to be as glad as you can. Rejoice forevermore. A cheerful Christian recommends religion. We usually look in the window of a tradesman’s shop to see what he sells; and persons very frequently look into our faces to ascertain what the thoughts of our heart are. Alas, that they should see any of us looking habitually sad. Some persons think that sour faces and somber garments are fitting emblems of sanctity. They would count it wicked to laugh, or if they were to do such a thing as smile in chapel, they would think that they had committed an unpardonable sin, though I never saw any law against that yet. All that is in us should bless His holy name, from the most playful fancy to the most sublime reverie. You need not emulate those who, to appear righteous, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Let me beg of you, Christian, when you fast, to be of a cheerful countenance, that you appear not unto men to fast. Be you ever so sad, try and keep your sadness to yourself. Do not let people hear you murmur, lest they should say, “Look at that Christian, he is weak as we are.”

You have heard the old fiction that Jesus Christ never laughed or smiled. It was brought forward at a friend's, where I was once staying. There was a little child in the room, who when she heard it, ran up to her father, and said, "Papa, that gentleman did not tell the truth." Of course everyone looked at her, and waited for her explanation. "I know that Jesus did, Papa," she added, "for the little children loved Him; and I don't think they would have loved Him if He had never smiled. Did not He say, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' and He took them up in His arms and gave them His blessing?" Do you think any good Christian could take up a little child without smiling? And if he did not smile, do you think the child would go to him? Jesus Christ did smile. A cheerful face wins honor to religion; a cheerful deportment glorifies God, for He has said, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Be joyful, Christians! Be joyful!—

"Why should the children of a King,  
Go mourning all their days?"

And now, before I close, let me appeal to those who have not this Consolation. Brethren, give heed. For Israel, there is Consolation. But for you—what is to become of some of you who have not this Consolation at all? Worldly men, from where do you draw your bliss—from the polluted ditches of a filthy world? Soon, alas, will they be emptied; and what will you do then? I see a Christian. There he is! He has been drinking all his life out of the river that makes glad the city of our God. And when he gets to heaven, he goes to the same stream. He drinks, and says, "This water is from the same fountain that I drank on earth. I drink the same bliss, but draw it nearer the fountainhead than I did before." But I think I see you who have

been drinking out of the black, dark, filthy reservoirs of earth, and when you get into eternity, you say, “Where is the stream at which I once slaked my thirst?” You look, and it is gone! Suppose you are a drunkard. Drunkenness was your happiness on earth. Will you be drunk in hell? There it would afford you no gratification. Here the theater was your pastime—will you find a theater in hell? The songs of foolish lasciviousness were here your delight—will you find such songs in eternity? Will you be able to sing them amidst unutterable burnings? Can you hum those lascivious notes when you are drinking the fearful gall of eternal woe? Oh, surely, no; the things in which you once trusted, and found your peace and comfort, will have gone forever! Oh, what is your happiness tonight, my friends? Is it a happiness that will last? Is it a joy that will endure? Or are you holding in your hand an apple of Sodom, and saying, “It is fair, it is passing fair,” when you know that you only look on it now, but will have to eat it in eternity? See the man who has that apple in his hand; he puts it to his mouth; he has to masticate it in eternity; and it is ashes—ashes on his lips—ashes between his teeth—ashes in his jaws—ashes forever—ashes that shall go into his blood, and make each vein a road for the hot feet of pain to travel, his heart an abode of misery, and his whole frame a den of loathsomeness!

Ah, if you have not this Consolation of Israel, do you know what you must have? You must have eternal torment. I have often remarked that the most wicked men hold the doctrine that there is no torment for the body in hell. Riding some time ago in a railway carriage with a man who seemed to have no idea of religion, he said, “I’m as cold as the devil,” and repeated the observation several times. I said to him, “He’s not at all cold, sir.” “I suppose you are a believer in hell, then?” he replied. “Yes, I am,” I said, “because I am a believer in the Bible.” “I don’t think there is any fire for the body, I don’t; I think it is

the conscience—remorse of conscience, dismay and despair, and such like; I don't think it has anything to do with the body," he said. And strange enough, many other ungodly men with whom I have spoken on the subject all seem to be partial to the hell that only deals with the conscience. The reason is this. They do not feel for their soul. They are natural men who have a natural care about their body, but they think that so long as their body gets off, they will not fear a hell at all. Hear this, then, you ungodly men and women; you who fear not the torture of the soul! Hear this—and let there be no metaphor or figure; hear it, for I speak God's plain language. For the body, too, there is a hell. It is not merely your soul that is to be tortured. What do you care for conscience? What do you care for memory? What do you care for imagination? Hear this, then, drunkard! Hear this, man of pleasure! That body which you pamper shall lie in pain! It was not a figure which Christ used when He said, "In hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

It was a *tongue*, sir! It was a *flame*, sir! It was not a metaphorical tongue, and it was not a metaphorical flame! It was not metaphorical water that he wanted. Real, positive, actual flames tormented the body of that rich Dives in hell! Ah, wicked man, those very hands of yours that now grasp the wine cup, shall grasp the cup of your damnation. The feet that carry you to the theater shall lie in brimstone forever! The eyes that look on the spectacles of lust—it is no figure, sir—those same eyes shall see murderous spectacles of misery. The same head which has oftentimes here throbbled with headache, shall there beat with pains you have not yet felt. Your heart, for which you care so little, shall become an emporium of miseries where

demons shall empty the scalding boilers of woe. It is not fiction! Read the Bible, and make a fiction of it if you can. There is a fire which knows no abatement, a worm which never dies, a flame unquenchable. As you go down those stairs, think there is a hell. It is no fiction. Let the old doctrine stand out once more, that God has prepared Tophet of old; the pile thereof is wood and much smoke—the breath of the Lord, like a flame of fire, does kindle it. There is a hell! O that you would flee from it! O that by divine grace you would escape it! Sodom was no figure—that was a real hail of fire from heaven. “Hurry,” said the angel, “hurry!” and put his hand behind the timely-warned fugitive. Man! I am come as an angel from heaven to you tonight, and I would put my hand upon your shoulder and cry, “Hurry! Hurry! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain! Hurry to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

If you know your need of a Savior, come and trust Him. If you feel your need of salvation, come and have it, for it is said, “Whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.” None are excluded, but those who exclude themselves. None are taken in but those whom divine grace takes in through the sovereign mercy of our God. May God receive you in His arms! May sinners be delivered from the pit of hell! May those find Him who never yet have sought the Consolation of Israel!

Brethren in Christ, I ask your prayers, that God may bless this sermon to the souls of men.

# 660 LIGHT – NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL – GEN. 1:1-5

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 12th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At Cornwall Road Chapel, Bayswater

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” — Genesis 1:1-5

THIS IS, no doubt, a literal and accurate account of God’s first day’s work in the creation of the world, but the first creation is not the subject of this morning’s discourse—*we would rather direct your minds to the second creation of God*. Every man who is saved by divine grace is a new creation. The great work which Jesus Christ is accomplishing in the world, by the Holy Spirit through the word, is the making of all things new. We believe the old creation to have been typical of the new, and we shall so use it; may we all be taught of the Lord while so doing.

Observe, dear friends, the state of the world; it is said to have been “*without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*.” Such is the state of every human heart till God the Holy Spirit visits it. So far as spiritual things are concerned, the

human heart is in a state of chaos and disorder. There is no thought of faith, of love, of hope, of obedience; it is a spiritually confused mass of dead sinfulness, in which everything is misplaced. It is void or utterly empty. Search the human heart through, and it is true of it as Paul says, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Over the whole, as in the old creation a thick darkness reigns, comparable to that of Egypt, a darkness that might be felt. This is true of all men—not of the ignorant in the lowest haunts of London, whose depraved parentage and education have prevented them from knowing divine things—but this is true of those who are trained up under the sound of the gospel, and whose morals are good and exemplary—they are still darkness, naturally, until God the Holy Spirit comes to renew them. In the whole world, whether it is among kings, statesmen, or divines, there is not one who has so much as a spark of spiritual light, unless he has received it from above, and he can only have received it from above through Him who is “the true Light which lights every man who comes into the world,” who is enlightened at all. Dark, dark, dark is the whole of humanity—it dwells in the black darkness of sin, and must perish there, unless the same divine power which said, “Let there be light,” of old, shall bestow spiritual light.

You observe that the first divine action in connection with the formation and shaping of the world, was this—“*The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*” The secret work of the Holy Spirit begins in the human heart—we cannot always say precisely when or how. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” In the hearts of God’s chosen ones, this Spirit works mysteriously and silently, but most efficaciously. The expression translated, “Moved upon,” conveys in the original the idea, of a bird



brooding over its nest. The Holy Spirit mysteriously quickens the dead heart, excites emotions, longings, desires. It may be some of you are feeling His operations this morning. You have not yet received the divine light, but there are workings of the divine energy in your spirit. You are not easy in your present lost estate—you are discontented to be what you now are; you are desirous to enter into the marvelous light of God. For this I thank God, and take it as a hopeful symptom, and I pray that He may, this morning, if it is His gracious will, lead you farther, and make you feel today that early operation of divine grace, by which the light of God is given to the darkened soul.

I. In considering the text, we shall notice **FIRST THE DIVINE DECREE**. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. The Lord Himself needs no light to enable Him to discern His creatures—

“Darkness and light in this agree,  
Great God they’re both alike to Thee.”

He looked upon the darkness, and resolved that He would transform its shapeless chaos into a fair and lovely world. We shall observe that the work of grace by which light enters the soul is a *necessary* work. God’s plan, for the sustaining of vegetable and animal life, rendered light necessary. Light is essential to life. There are few operations which can be carried on in the world without some degree of light, and certainly no heart can be saved without spiritual light. It is the light of God, my brethren, which first shows us our lost estate; for we know nothing of it naturally. We think that we are righteous, that all is well with our souls; but when the divine light comes in, we discover that we are fallen in Adam, and are terribly undone. Naturally, we think that we are no worse than others, that if we have offended, our offenses are very minor, and almost deserve

to be pardoned; but when light enters, the exceeding sinfulness of sin is discovered. This causes pain and anguish of heart; but that pain and anguish are necessary, in order to bring us to lay hold on Jesus Christ, whom the light of God next displays to us.

No man ever knows Christ till the light of God shines on the cross. You may look at a picture of the bleeding Jesus, you may read the story of His wounds, but you have not seen Christ, so as to be saved by His death, unless the light of His Spirit has revealed Him to you as the great substitute for sinners, the surety of the new covenant, and suffering in your place. You know Him not, unless the mysterious light of God has led you to read these words as your own, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” We can see neither our state, nor our sin, nor our Savior without the light of God. You who worship God, but are not converted, are like the men of Athens, who worshipped an unknown God. You do not feel Him to be a real existence; you do not come near to Him; you have no true love to Him; you cannot cry, “Abba Father,” you are not made partakers of the divine nature, and you can never be brought near to God unless heavenly light shall manifest God to you as your God, who in eternal purposes chose you to be His, and by the gift of His dear Son has bought you to be His forever. The great truths of heaven, hell, and immortality, are not clearly perceived till the light of God shines on them. You receive them as matter of settled doctrine, because you have been taught them from your youth up—He who brings life and immortality to light is Christ Jesus, and, without the light, life and immortality are mere names, not real things to you. Beloved, if we could save men by the application of drops of water, or by giving them bread and wine to eat and drink; if we were so crazy as to believe, that souls could be affected by physical substances, and that the hearts of men could be

renewed by external observances, there would be no need of the light of God! But ours is a religion which appeals to the understanding, which acts upon the will, which moves the heart, and herein little can be done with men while they are in spiritual darkness. They must have the light of God, or else they cannot see; and if they cannot see, they cannot receive; for looking to Jesus is the gospel mode of receiving. So, beloved, the making of light was absolutely necessary in the world, and the creation of God's light in the heart of man is a most necessary work.

Next observe, it was a very *early work*. Light was created on the first day, not on the third, fourth, or sixth, but on the first day; and one of the first operations of the Spirit of God in a man's heart, is to give light enough to see his lost estate, and to perceive that he cannot save himself from it, but must look elsewhere. Come, dear hearer, have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Are you resting upon Him as all your salvation, and all your desire? Have you the light of God enough to look to Him, and be saved, leaving all your former boasting, nailing them all to His cross, and taking Him to be your all in all? It is a very early work of divine grace, I say, to show you that you are a sinner, and to reveal to you that you have a Savior. It is the first day's work, and I have no right to believe myself to be a new creature in God at all, unless I have received light enough to know those two great and weighty facts—myself lost in Adam but, saved in the second Adam—undone by sin, but restored by the Savior's righteousness.

It is well for us to remember that light-giving is a *divine* work. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. O beloved, how often have I said it, and there has been no light whatever! These eyes have often wept over unenlightened souls, but my glistening tears could not give them a ray of the light of God! Have I not bowed my knee, and prayed full many a time for the conversion of men, and though prayer has power

because it links man with God, yet in itself, it has none; for our prayers for others can do nothing whatever for them till Jehovah Himself says, “Let there be light.” Dear hearer, the Lord must come into distinct and direct contact with your spirit, or else your darkness will become the outer darkness of eternal ruin! Speak of what your free will can do, of what your creature ability can do, alas, these can do nothing whatever for you! They will plunge you deeper and deeper into the blackness of darkness forever, but into the light of God you never can come, and never will come, unless that eternal voice shall say, “Let there be light.” Let us always remember this in preaching the gospel, and never depend upon man, or upon the word alone, but be this our prayer, “Oh God, do Your work, for You alone can do so effectually.”

This divine work is *worked by the word*. God did not sit in solemn silence and create the light—He spoke. He said, “Light be,” and light was. So the way in which we receive the light of God is by the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Christ Himself is the essential Word, and the preaching of Christ Jesus is the operative Word. We receive Christ actually, when God’s power goes with God’s Word—then we have light; and, therefore, the necessity of continually preaching the Word of God. If I preach my own word, no light will go with it, but when it is *God’s Word*, then, I may expect that light will follow. Oh, to preach Christ’s cross! My brothers, choose no ministry but that which savors much of God’s Word, and especially of the Word Christ Jesus. Better to preach one sermon full of Christ, than a thousand in which He shall be left out. “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” The great magnet and loadstone of gospel attraction, is Christ Himself; and if we leave Him out, it is as though we should expect the world to receive light without the Almighty Word.

While light was conferred in connection with the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, it was *unaided by the darkness itself*. How could darkness assist to make itself light? No, the darkness never did become light. It had to give place to light, but darkness could not help God. If your understanding could resolve darkness into its elements, can you see anything in it which can help to bring the day? If you can, I cannot. Look at your own fallen nature—is there anything there, which could assist in the great work of salvation? If you think so, you know not yourself! The power which saves a sinner is not the power of man. The power of man must die, for its only use is to stand out as far as it is able against the power of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God; neither, indeed, can it be. You cannot extract out of any amount of darkness, a single beam of light; and you cannot extract out of any amount of flesh—purify it, educate it, direct it, guide it as you may—you cannot extract anything like spiritual light—that must come from above. “You must be born-again.” Do not think Christians are made by education—they are made by creation. You may wash a corpse as long as ever you please, but you cannot wash *life* into it. You may deck it in flowers, and robe it in scarlet and fine linen, but you cannot make it live—the vital spark must come from above. Regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but by the power and energy of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God alone.

As this light was unassisted by darkness, so was it also *unsolicited*. There came no voice out of that thick darkness, “Oh God, enlighten us!” There was no cry of prayer, no note of desire that God would send light; the desire and the thought began with *Deity*, not with the darkness. He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. The first work of divine grace in the heart does not begin with *man's* desire, but with God's *implanting*

the desire. Dear hearer, if you desire to be saved by grace, God *gave* you that desire, for you could never get as far as that apart from Him. Your darkness can be darkness, and that is all it can be; it cannot long for, or aspire after the light of God; in fact, if your soul longs after light, it has some light already—a sincere desire is a part of that divine light and life, and must have come from above. See then, the ruin of nature and the freeness of grace. Void and dark, a chaos given up to be covered with blackness and darkness forever, and, while as yet, it is not seeking God, the light arises, and the promise is fulfilled, “I am found of them who sought Me not: I said, behold Me! Behold Me, to a people who were not a people.” While we were lying in our blood, filthily polluted, defiled, He passed by, and He said in the sovereignty of His love, “Live,” and we do live. The whole must be traced to sovereign grace—from this sacred well of discriminating, distinguishing grace, we must draw water this morning, and we must pour it out, saying, “Oh Lord, I will praise Your name, for the first origin of my light was Your sovereign purpose, and nothing in me.”

Before we leave this point I must have you notice that this light of God came *instantaneously*. The Hebrew suggests this far better than our translation—it is sublimely brief. “Light be: light was.” Here let us observe, that the work of giving spiritual light is instantaneous. No matter through what process you may go, which you may conclude afterward to have been preparatory to the light, and there is such a process, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters before the light came, yet the absolute flash which brings salvation is instantaneous. A man is saved in a moment. From death to life is not the work of years, it is done at once. Saul of Tarsus rides to Damascus, foaming at the mouth with threats against God’s saints—Jesus Christ appears to him, and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul, the humble follower of Jesus, in a moment; and

all conversions, though they may seem to you gradual, must be like this, for Paul says, “To me, first, God showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them who believe,” as if Paul’s salvation was the pattern upon which all others are cut. There must be a time in which you were dead, and then another instant, in which you were alive. So with darkness—there must be a period in which you have no light, and another period, in which you have some light and that transition, must be an instantaneous one. O that the Lord would work a great work this morning—it is in His power, if He wills it, to turn every one of your hearts to Himself! Let Him but speak the word and say, “Light be!” and no matter how dark the sinner’s mind, if the divine decree shall go forth, “Light be,” that depraved, foolish, drunken sinner, will in a moment, feel his heart begin to melt.

As it is instantaneous, so it is *irresistible*. Darkness must give place when God speaks. Some ascribe omnipotence to the will of man, and lift man up to a sort of rivalry with God. Beloved, man has power to resist the *ordinary* motions of the Spirit; but when the Holy Spirit comes to *effectual* work, and puts forth His mighty power, who shall stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” is the divine claim of old, and it is true of our God to this day. Oh, how glorious is God when we think of Him thus! I could not worship a little God—but when I think of my great God, as looking down upon the blackness and darkness of human nature, and saying, “Let there be light,” and light comes at once—then I magnify God for His grace, and bless His name!

## II. The second point is **DIVINE OBSERVATION**.

We read in the fourth verse, “*And God saw the light.*” Does He not see everything? Yes, beloved, He does, but this does not refer to the general perception of God of all His works, but

is something special. “God saw the light”—He looked at it with approval, gazed upon it with pleasure. I received, this morning, great satisfaction in turning over those few words in my own mind, “God saw the light.” I thought to myself—“Ah, the Lord looks with special observation upon His own work of grace in His people.” If the Lord has given you His light, dear friend, no matter though you may only just now have received it, God looks on that light with an eye with which He does not view other things. He sees all other things in His omniscience, but He sees *this* light in you as His offspring, as dear to Himself as His own handiwork—He looks upon it with approval—He sees it with tender observation. A father looks upon a crowd of boys in a school, and sees them all, but there is one boy whom he sees very differently from all the rest—he watches him with care—it is his own child, and his eyes are especially there. Brethren, though you have come here sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, the Lord sees what is good in you, for He has put it there. Satan can see the light and he tries to quench it—God sees it and preserves it. The world can see that light and hates it, and would, if possible, extinguish it; but God sees it, and He restrains the world, that it cannot utterly take from you the vital spark. Sometimes *you* cannot see the light, and I do not suppose it is in the nature of light to perceive itself, but God saw the light, and that is better. It is better that God should see grace in me, than that I should see grace in myself. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God’s people—I cannot have much joy and peace in believing, unless I have the gracious assurance of this fact, but still, that fact is not the foundation of my hope, for, whether I know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. **THIS** is the foundation—“The Lord knows them who are His.”

You and I are apt to say of someone, “What a Christian he is.” Very likely his religion is all external show, and the Lord



has no regard unto his offering any more than He had unto the offering of Cain. We look at that Pharisee, standing in the temple with his phylacteries, and hear him saying, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” and we envy him, and think what a noble saint he is, but the Lord knows him, and sees no light in him. But that poor humble publican, who stands in the corner and dares not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, cannot see any light in himself, but God sees the light in him, and that man goes down to his house justified rather than the other. You may be, today, going down, down into the vaults of despondency and even despair—ah, but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are still seeking to rest in Him, God sees the light, and He will take care to discern between you and the darkness and to preserve you even to the day of His Son’s appearing! Beloved, it is most pleasant to the believer, to know that God’s eyes are never taken off from that work of grace which He has begun. Here is a promise, “I, the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day.” Now this is—I must say again—this is a precious thought to those of you who have watched and guarded yourselves, and felt your own powerlessness to do so, and who are ready to give it up because you have thought, “Well, I cannot watch always and I fear I shall become a prey to temptation.” The Lord watches you and He sees the light. He has His eyes always fixed upon the work of grace that is in your soul. It is observable that in the New Testament we find the apostles mentioning the virtues of the saints, but very seldom that they say anything about their faults. Take, for instance, Abraham. His faith is extolled, but nothing is said about his equivocation. In the case of Rahab, her faith is magnified, but nothing is said about her lying. Why is that? Is it not because God saw the light, and when He was writing this book of the new creation, He said nothing of the darkness? He

saw His own work and would not regard the devil's work, and the work of fallen human nature, too; He had respect only to the light.

**III.** We pass on to the third point, and that is, **DIVINE APPROBATION.**

“God saw the light, *that it was good.*” Light is good in all respects. The *natural* light is good. Solomon says, “It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.” But you did not need Solomon to inform you upon that point. Any blind man, who will tell you the tale of his sorrows, will be quite philosopher enough, to convince you that light is good. *Gospel* light is good. “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see.” You only need to travel into heathen lands, and witness the superstition and cruelty of the dark places of the earth, to understand that gospel light is good. As for *spiritual* light, those who have received it, long for more of it, that they may see yet more and more the glory of heaven's *essential* light! O God, You are of good the unmeasured sea; You are of light, both soul and source, and center. Whether then, we take natural light, gospel light, spiritual light, or essential light, we may say of it, as God did, that it was good. But we are speaking now of spiritual light. Why is that good? Well, it must be so, from its Source. The light emanates from God, in whom is no darkness at all, and, as it comes absolutely and directly from Him, it must be good. As every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, so everything which comes from above is good and perfect. The Lord distributes no alloyed metal—He never gives His people that which is mixed and debased. Your Words, O God, are pure as silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times. The light of the new nature is good when we consider its origin.

It is good, again, when we consider *its likeness*. Light is likened to God. It is a thing so spiritual, so utterly to be ungrasped by the hand of flesh, that it has often been selected

as the very *type* of God. Certainly the new nature in man is likened to God. It is, in fact, the nature of God implanted in us! The Holy Spirit dwells in us, and is the *radix*—the root of the new nature, by which we become akin with the Most High. The Spirit of adoption by which we cry, “Abba, Father,” is the Holy Spirit Himself, working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Ignatius used to call himself, Theophorus, or the God-Bearer. The title might seem eccentric, but the fact is true of all the saints—they bear God about with them. God dwells in His saints as in a temple.

It is good, also in its *effect*. It is good for a man to know his danger—it makes him retreat from it. It is good for him to know the evil of his sin—it makes him avoid it, and repent of it. It is good for him to know a Savior’s love—it leads him to trust the Savior, and brings him to pardon, to justification, and to eternal life. It is good to have the light which reveals the God of love, for without Him we are aliens, orphans, houseless wanderers. It is good to have the light to see the world to come, that we may escape its agonies; that we may seek after its glories. It is good to have the light of God in all respects, for otherwise, like blind men, we would wretchedly and miserably wander in a labyrinth, and miss our way to glory and to God. Light is good in its effects.

It is good, moreover, because it *glorifies God*. Where would God’s glory be in the outward universe without light? Could we gaze upon the landscape? Could we stand upon the hilltop and drink in the view, and then praise the glorious Maker, who had made these marvelous works, if there were no light? I question whether those first-born sons of light, the angels, would have a song to sing before the eternal throne, if light were taken away. Certainly, beloved, spiritual light brings glory to God. It prostrates us in the dust, but it lifts Him up. Spiritual light shows us our emptiness, our poverty, our wretchedness—

but it reveals in blessed contrast His fullness, His riches, His freeness of grace; the more light in the soul, the more gratitude to God. The more we know of Christ, and the covenant of grace, and of God Himself, the louder and sweeter is that song, which our glad hearts send up to the eternal throne. Let me say of the work of God in the soul as compared to light, that it is good in *the widest possible sense*. The new nature which God puts in us, never sins—it cannot sin, because it is born of God. “What?” you say, “Does a Christian never sin?” Not with the new nature; the *new nature* never sins—the *old nature* sins. It is the darkness which is dark—the light is not darkness; the light is always light. It is not possible that the Christ who dwells in us could sin.

I again repeat the words, “He cannot sin, because he is born of God.” He keeps himself so that the evil one touches him not. What sin there is in the believer, comes from the remnants of corruption; the spirit which is implanted, never can sin, never can have communion with sin, any more than light can have communion with darkness. It is good—so good that it is the very same life which shall enter heaven. You must not suppose that a believer will have a new life granted to him when he gets to heaven. Beloved, he will never die. The flesh dies, but the new nature which God gives to us is as immortal as God Himself—it can neither be quenched here by temptation, nor there by the act of death. The love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is everlasting, ever living; and though corruption and worms destroy this body, yet the new-born spirit, like the light, will never see corruption. Jesus Christ has Himself said, “He who lives and believes in Me shall never die.” The new nature shall never die. Its light shall develop itself from dawning twilight into the splendor of noonday, and shall abide everlastingly in fullness of glory, according to the promise, “Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon

withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.”

**IV.** Now I must, by your patience, take you to the next point, which is, **DIVINE SEPARATION.**

It appears that though God made light, there was still darkness in the world. Read the fourth verse, “*And God divided the light from the darkness.*” Beloved, the moment you become a Christian, you will begin to fight. You will be easy and comfortable enough, as long as you are a sinner, but as soon as you become a Christian, you will have no more rest. John Bunyan was no great poet, but sometimes he struck out great truths of God in his rhymes. He has this one—

“A Christian is seldom long at ease  
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize.”

This is very true, because a believer is a double man. There are two principles in him. At first, there was but one principle, which was darkness. Now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. So observe this separation. One part of the divine work in the soul of man is to make a separation *in the man himself*. I will put this plainly, and it shall be a test, between a child of God and the child of darkness, this morning. Do you feel an inward contention and war going on? Can you read these verses and understand them—they are very strange verses—they are taken out of the same Psalm and follow each other. “So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You hold me by my right hand.” There are hundreds of people who, if you were to preach from that text would say, “Why the man contradicts himself. He makes himself out to be a beast, and yet he says he dwells near to God!” Ah, none but the believer knows that secret.

You remember the apostle Paul's own words in the seventh chapter of Romans. Many stupid people, who are ignorant of the inner life, make it out that Paul could not have been a Christian at all when he wrote those words, but he was an *advanced* believer—and only advanced believers can sympathize with him. "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Permit me to put these two verses together—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." How can these two things be consistent? Ask the spiritual man—he will tell you, "The Lord divides between light and darkness." Darkness, by itself, will go on comfortably enough; but when the Lord sends in light, there will be a conflict—a terrible conflict, too—and you will find your own self divided

into camps; you will find both Cain and Abel in your heart, Egyptians and Israelites in your soul, and if there is a David in your heart, there will be a Saul, too.

Whereas there is a division inside the Christian, there is certain to be a *division outside*. As soon as ever the Lord gives to any believer light, he begins to separate himself from the darkness. The world's religion used to satisfy him. If there was a pretty building, and a good-looking minister who could put his words together well, and garnish the altar finely, the child of darkness did not care what he heard— whether the gospel was preached or not. But as soon as ever he receives the light of God, he cries, "All this is nothing to me; I need the light of God, and the truth of God, and I cannot go to hear anything but the gospel." He separates himself from the world's religion, finds out where Christ is preached, and goes there. Then as to society, the dead, carnal religionist, can get on very well in ordinary society, but it is not so when he has light. I cannot go with frivolous company, wasting the evening, showing off my fine clothes, and talking frivolity and nonsense. Where are the children of light? Very likely, down in some ragged school, where poor men and women seek to bless the little ones. That is the place for the child of light. It does not matter what particular class of society the saints belong to, we shall seek their society. We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; the light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. My dear brethren, what God has divided, let us never unite. God has set an everlasting distance between the sheep and the goats—let us do the same. Christ went outside the camp, bearing His reproach—let us, therefore, come out from among them, and be separate. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners—let us be nonconformists to the world; let us dissent from all sin, and be distinguished from

the world, even as Jesus Christ was not of the world. This is a work of grace, then, to make a wondrous separation.

**V. Next notice DIVINE NOMINATION.**

Things must have names; Adam named the beasts, but God Himself named the day and the night. Observe the fifth verse, “And God called the light Day, and the darkness called He Night.” It is a very blessed work of grace, to teach us to call things by their right names. Why did He call the light, Day, and the darkness, Night, except for this reason—He seems to say, “Let these things be *distinguished*, let light wear its name of *Day*, and darkness its title of *Night*.” From which I gather, that the good which God works in His people must be good always, and can never be described as bad. The spiritual aspirations of God’s people never can be evil. Carnal reason calls them folly, but the Lord would have us call them good. Here is a man who is panting after graces which will cost him great sacrifices, panting after a spirituality which will separate him from men; it cannot be evil for him to seek the highest possible degree of divine grace. On the other hand, that which is darkness cannot be light, and must not be called anything but Night. We have heard of some who have taken the sins of God’s people and said, “These are not sins in these people.” This is a grievous error, for darkness is darkness, and must be called Night wherever it may be, and if I find sin in my father or mother, dearly as I love them, and desire to have them perfect, yet I must not make excuse for it and seek to call darkness day. I must not in myself, when I discern imperfection, find a soft name for it by which I may take away its wickedness. I must call it what it is.

I remember hearing of a good man; I believe he was such, who fell into drunkenness on one occasion. He was excommunicated from church fellowship, and properly so; but afterwards he became very penitent, and he went about the



streets like a man who really should die of grief, and ashamed because of his sin. He could not find peace. A dear brother, who knew something of him, took him aside one day, and said, "Dear brother, have you made a full confession of your sin before God?" He thought he had. "Now," said the other, "it is a hard thing for me to ask, but I should like to hear you confess this sin." So he did. When he came to the act of confessing his sin to God, he said, "Lord, You know I have indulged my appetites," and so on. He was not a bit better. "Now," said his friend, "My dear brother, you had better unveil your whole sin, and hide nothing." Then he prayed thus—"Lord, You know I got *drunk*." It was all right as soon as he brought the thing out, and called the darkness, night, and went no longer round about. The Lord will not hear His people if they call the darkness, day. He will not attend to them. He will have them call darkness, night. So, let us go where we may, whether in ourselves or in other people, we must learn to call a spade a spade, to call things by their right names. There is a great deal, remember, in the names which we give to things, because they are generally the index of our own estimation of what those things are. It is a work of grace to teach us always to call the light, day, and the darkness, night.

"But," says one, "can't the right, sometimes be wrong?" Never, never! I am asked by a man this question, "There is such and such a church; I am a minister there, and there are some things I don't agree with, and yet I swear I do. I swear that, *ex animo*, I agree, although I do not. If I did not swear, I would lose my sphere of usefulness. If I don't swear it, I shall never have an opportunity of doing good." My dear friend, you have nothing to do with that; whether you are doing good or mischief, your business is to call darkness, night, and light, day. Never do a bad thing, though you might hope to achieve a world of good by it. Right is never wrong, and wrong is never

right. It cannot be right for a man to do evil that good may come. Of those who hold such maxims it is written, “Their damnation is just.” Let the light be called day and the darkness night.

Observe again—this is somewhat remarkable—that we read in the next sentence, “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Who called it so? I do not find that God did, yet it is in the Book of God and therefore I cannot take exception to it. How is it? The evening! Why the evening was darkness and the morning was light. The two together are called by the same name that is given to the light alone! What then? Why beloved, in every believer there is darkness and there is light, and yet, he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named from the major part of him, he is to be named from the grander quality. He is to be named a *saint*, because there is saintness in him, notwithstanding all the sin. Now this will be a comforting thought to those of you who are mourning your infirmities. While I was talking about the light of God, you said, “Yes, thank God I have some; I know the difference between it and darkness, yet for all that, darkness is my daily pest and trouble. Can I be a child of God while there is any darkness in me?” Dear brethren, you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; from the day you shall be called altogether, as if you were now perfectly what you will *be* soon. You shall be called the child of the light, though there is darkness in you still! You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that the evening is put first. We naturally have darkness first, and it is often first in our mournful apprehension, as we have to come to God with, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The place of the morning is second, for it only dawns because of divine grace. But, O beloved, it is a blessed aphorism of John

Bunyan that, that which is last, lasts forever. That which is first, has to give up its turn to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that, though I am darkness, when once I am light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; your sun shall no more go down. The first day in this life is an evening and a morning—but the second day, when we shall be with God forever—shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon!

I have thus opened up a few experimental secrets. Some of you can say, “I understand it, for I feel it all in my life! I trust I am a new creature.” Dear friends, let me congratulate you; let me say to you, “Walk in the light of God; live as children of the light; be always with your faces towards the sun—seek Christ—long to be made like He, and never be content till, like the angel whom Milton speaks of, who dwells in the sun, you come to dwell in God, and lose yourself most blessedly by being swallowed up and filled with all the fullness of His glory.”

As for others here present, and I fear there are some such, who have said, “This is all strange to me.” Dear friend, I pray God it may not be long strange to you, for if you are a stranger to a new creation, you are a stranger to the only hope of happiness. “You must be born-again,” is the old sentence which divine revelation has spoken—“You *must*.” It is not, “You *may* be”—it is, “You *must*.” It is not, “Some of you may do without it—you are so good you do not need it.” No, “You *must*, you *MUST* be born- again.” He who sits on the throne says, “Behold I make all things new.” Has He made *you* new? The gates of heaven are shut against the old creation—the floods destroyed it at the first—the floods of fire shall destroy it again. If you are not newly created, you shall not outlive the general blaze. The first creation must be swept away; and you, if you are not newly created, must be swallowed up in everlasting misery; but if God has made you a new creature, that new creation is not to be touched by fire, nor flood, nor

death, or grave. You, as a part of that new creation, shall sing in the new Jerusalem, which shall come down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband; you shall tread her golden streets, delight in her jasper radiance, and sing with the mighty hosts in that day, when they shall sing a new song unto the Lord who has created all things new!

The Lord grant we may be all present in the new Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all the saints, and unto God be praise, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
John 1, 3:18. And 1 Thessalonians 5.***

## **661 GREAT ARBITRATION CASE – JOB 9:33**

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**A Sermon  
Delivered by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Neither is there any mediator between us, who might lay his hand on us both.” — Job 9:33**

THE PATRIARCH JOB, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage, and declined the controversy, saying, “He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment.” Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly misstating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. In his mournful plight, he sighed for an arbitrator who, while dealing justly for God, would, at the same time, deal kindly with poor flesh and blood, being able to lay his hand upon both. And, dear friends, what Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot say with Job that there is no mediator who can lay his hand upon both of us because there is now, “one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” In Him, let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in Him; and if we have not yet received Him, may almighty grace bring us, even now, to accept Him as our advocate and friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice Holy God and His sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned; he has broken God’s law in every part of it, and has wantonly cast off

from him the allegiance which was due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man which was formally instituted at Sinai, and must be pleaded in the court of King's Bench before the Judge of the quick and the dead. God is the great plaintiff against His sinful creatures who are the defendants. If that suit is carried into court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled until that dreadful hour. Sinner, it would be well for you to "agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way," for if you are once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth, there is not the slightest hope that your suit can be decided otherwise than to your eternal ruin. "Weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," will be the doom adjudged you forever, if your case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at the fiery throne of absolute justice. But the infinite grace of God proposes an arbitration, and I trust there are many here who are not anxious to have their suit carried into court, but are willing that the appointed mediator should stand between them and God, and lay His hand upon both, and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation. There is hope for you, bankrupt sinner that you may yet be at peace with God. There is a way by which your debts may yet be paid; that way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the mediator.

Let me begin *by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or mediator*; then let me *take you into the arbitrator's court and show you His proceedings*; and then, for a little while, if there is enough time, let us dwell upon the *happy success of our great Mediator*.

I. First of all, let me describe what are **THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A MEDIATOR**.

The first essential is that *both parties should be agreed to accept him*. Let me come to you, you sinner against whom God has laid His suit, and put the matter to you. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be His umpire in His dispute. He appointed Him to the office, and chose Him for it before He laid the foundations of the world. He is God's fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put His hand upon the eternal Father without fear, because He is dearly beloved of the Father's heart. He is "very God of very God," and is in no respect inferior to "God over all, blessed forever." But He is also a man like yourself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. No, He went farther—He was tempted as you have been—and farther still, He suffered the pangs of death as you, poor mortal man, will one day have to do. Now, what do you think? God has accepted Him—can you agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be *your* mediator, too? Does foolish enmity possess you, or does grace reign, and lead you to accept Emmanuel, "God with us," as umpire in this great dispute? Let me say to you that you will never find another so near akin to you, so tender, so sympathetic, and with such a heart of compassion towards you. Love streamed from His eyes in life, and poured from His wounds in death; He is "the express image" of Jehovah's person, and you know that Jehovah's name is "Love." "God is love," and Christ is love. Sinner, has divine grace brought you to your senses? Will you accept Christ? Are you willing that He should take this case into His hands and arbitrate between you and God? If God accepts Him, and you accept Him, too, then He has one of the first qualifications for being a mediator.

But, in the next place, *both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator's hands*. If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him

is only making an opportunity for wrangling—without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now, God has committed “all power” into the hands of His Son. Jesus Christ is the ambassador of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers; He comes commissioned by His Father, and can say in all that He does towards sinners, that His Father’s heart is with Him. If the case is settled by Him, the Father is agreed. Now, sinner, does grace move your heart to do the same? Will you agree to put your case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of man? Will you abide by His decision? Will you have it settled according to His judgment, and shall the verdict which He gives stand absolute and fast with you? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator; but if not, remember, though He may make peace for others, He will never make peace for *you*. Understand this—that until the grace of God has made you willing to trust the case in Jesus’ hands, there can be no peace for you, and you are willfully remaining *God’s enemy* by refusing to accept His dear Son.

Further, let us say that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, *it is essential that he be a fit person*. If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another *king* should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two—who was both prince and beggar—then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case! There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for great is the gulf which exists between the Eternal God and poor fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why by none except by one who is God, and who, at the same time, can become man. Now, the only being who can do this is Jesus Christ. He can put His hand on you, stooping down to all your infirmity and your sorrow—and He can put His other hand upon the Eternal



Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God, and co-eternal with the Father! Do you not see, then, His fitness? Surely it would be the path of wisdom, sinner, to accept Him at once as the arbitrator in the case. See how well He understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case. But Christ knows your case, and the law concerning it, because He has lived among men, and has passed through and suffered the penalties of justice. Surely there cannot be a better skilled or more judicious mediator than our blessed Redeemer.

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that *he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement*. If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator, he may delight to “set dogs by the ears,” but if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both, and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be one man in a thousand—very precious when found—but very hard to discover. Oh that all lawsuits could be decided by such men. In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for His Father’s glory, and for the sinner’s welfare, that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delights not in the death of sinners, and He knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to His bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Savior’s bosom swells with an intense desire to make to Himself a great name as a peacemaker. Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories as Christ has to *end* war, and to win the bloodless triumphs of peace. From the heights of heaven, He came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth, He leaped into the depths of the grave; then up again at

a bound, He sprang to earth, and up again to heaven; and still He rests not, but presses on in His mighty work to ingather sinners, and to reconcile them unto God; making Himself a propitiation for their sins.

You see, then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and you may well repose all confidence in Him; but if you shall live and die without accepting Him as your arbitrator, and the case goes against you—you will have none to blame but yourself. When the everlasting damages shall be assessed against you in your soul and body forever, you shall have to curse only your own folly for having been the cause of your ruin. May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Spirit so turned the natural bent and current of your will that you have chosen Him because He has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ, this day, is standing before God for you? He is God's anointed—is He your elected? God's choice pitches upon Him—does your choice agree? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before He speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election, as His people, that we are made willing in the day of God's power. Lay your hope where God has laid your help, namely, on Christ, mighty to save. You cannot have an arbitrator except both sides are agreed. Do you say, "Yes, yes, with all my soul I choose Him"? Then let us proceed.

**II.** And now, I shall need, by your leave, to **TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON, AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT MEDIATOR.**

"The man, Christ Jesus," who is "God over all, blessed forever," opens His court *by laying down the principles upon which*

*He intends to deliver judgment*, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are two-fold—First, *strict justice*, and secondly, *fervent love*.

The arbitrator has determined that, let the case go as it may, *there shall be full justice done*, justice to the very extreme, whether it is for or against the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the law says that the sinner shall die, the arbitrator declares that He will judge that the sinner shall die; and if, on the other hand, the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, He intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely ETERNAL LIFE. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it is in favor of the plaintiff or of the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

But the arbitrator also says that He will judge according to the second rule, that of *fervent love*. He loves His Father, and therefore, He will decide on nothing that may taint His honor or disgrace His crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that He will allow heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the Most High. On the other hand, He so loves the poor defendant, man, that He will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so great a love that nothing will delight Him more than to decide in his favor, and He will be but too glad if He can be the means happily establishing peace between the two. How these principles are to meet will be seen by-and-by. At present, He lays them down very positively. “He who rules among men must be just.” An arbitrator must be just, or else He is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. On the other hand, He must be tender, for His name, as God, is love; and His nature as man is

gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let justice and love unite if they can.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the arbitrator *next calls upon the plaintiff to state His case*. Let us listen while the great Creator speaks—may God give me grace to reverently state it in His name, as one poor sinner stating God’s case against us all. “Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know; My people do not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people filled with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children who are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.” The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once, most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all His commandments—some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination. He says that we, against light and knowledge, have chosen the evil and forsaken the good. He charges that, knowing what we were doing, we have turned aside from His most righteous law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that, inasmuch as we are His creatures, we ought to have obeyed Him, that, inasmuch as we owe our very lives to His daily care, we ought to have rendered Him service instead of disobedience, and to have been His loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to His throne. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the law, is laid to our charge before the Mediator. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that the whole head is sick, and the whole

heart is faint; that there is none that does good, no, not one; that we have all gone out of the way, and altogether become unprofitable. This is God's case. He says, "I made this man; curiously was he worked in the lowest parts of the earth; and all his members bear traces of My singular handiwork. I made him for My honor, and he has not honored Me. I created him for My service, and he has not served Me. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his nostrils; the bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of My bounty; his garments are the uniform of My charity; and all this while he has neither thought of Me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in My service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker, he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbors, the borough in which he dwells; but I, who made him, I have had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto Me." I think I may put the plaintiff's case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse if that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him, he would carry another? No, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog, which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you—fly at you, and tear you apart in his rage? Some of us have done this to God; we have perhaps cursed Him to His face; we have broken His sabbaths, laughed at His gospel, and persecuted His saints. You would have said of such a dog, "Let it die! Why should I harbor in my house a dog that treats me thus?" Yet, hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; God has borne with your ill manners, and He still cries "mercy." He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of His dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay; and these words should be like fire in the sinner's soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone, I felt much sympathy with God that He should have

been so ill-treated; and whereas some men speak of the flames of hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago.

The plaintiff's case having thus been stated, *the defendant is called upon by the Mediator for his*; and I think I hear him as he begins. First of all, the trembling defendant sinner pleads—*"I confess to the indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil."* The Mediator at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it is conceded that the man's heart, itself, is enmity against God, this is an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended; but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly, and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God, and is fully set upon working the King's damage and dishonor. It is determined, therefore, by the Mediator that this excuse will not stand, and He gives a case in point—a thief is brought up for stealing, and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal, and that, therefore, he could not help running off with any goods within his reach. The judge very properly answers, "Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise, for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through; what you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation."

Then, the defendant pleads, in the next place, that, albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, *yet he is no worse than other offenders*, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. He says he has been envious, and angry, and worldly, and covetous, and has

forgotten God; but then, he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer—and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at. But the great Mediator at once turns to the Statute Book, and says that as He is about to give His decision by law, that plea is not at all tenable, for the law book has it—“Cursed is every man who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” The offense of one sinner does not excuse the offense of another; and the arbitrator declares that He cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand; that the present offender has, on his own confession, broken the law, and that as the law book stands, that is the only question to be decided, for “the soul that sins, it shall die,” and if the defendant has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him.

The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet *he has done a great many good things*. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to chapel. It is true he did not pray, but he belonged to a singing class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbor as himself, but he always liked to relieve the poor. But the Arbitrator, looking the sinner full in the face, tells him that this plea also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. “Those things,” says He, “you *ought* to have done, but not to have left the others undone.” And He tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel; and that having tithed mint, and anise, and cumin, is no justification for having devoured a widow’s house. To have forgotten God is in itself a great enormity; to have lived without serving Him is a crime of omission so great, that whatever the sinner may have done on the contrary, stands for nothing at all, since he has even then, in that case, done only what he ought to have done. You see at

once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, “Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account, because I did pay you another bill—you ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes, because I did pay you for another suit.” I think the answer would be, “But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you *ought* to do—I still have a demand upon you for this.” So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable), and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says *that for the future he will do better*. He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended, but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still, he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all; he is conceited enough to think that he can, in the future, keep himself from committing sin; thereby, you see, admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much. “Now,” he says, “if for life I become a teetotaler, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunk; suppose now that I am always honest and steady, and never again say one ill word—will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings, and for having blasphemed God?” But the Mediator rules, still with kindness and gentleness, that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past; for He finds in the law book no promise whatever made to that effect; but the statute runs in these words, “He will by no means spare the guilty.” “Cursed is



everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

You would think that the defendant would now be fairly beaten, but he is not—he asks leave to step across the way *to bring in a friend of his*. He is allowed to do so, and comes back with a gentleman dressed in such a strange style, that, if you had not sometimes seen the same in certain Catholic Churches, you would suppose him to have arrayed himself for the mere purpose of amusing children at a show where a clown is the presiding genius. The defendant seems to imagine that if the case is left to this gentleman in the white shirt and ribbons, he will settle it with ease. He has with him a little bottle of water by which he can turn hearts of stone into flesh—making heirs of wrath into “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” He has a certain portion of mystical bread, and magical wine, the reception with which he can work wonderful transformation, producing flesh and blood at his reverence’s will and pleasure! In fact, this gentleman trades and gets his living by the prosecution of magic. He has occult influences streaming from his fingers, which influences he derived originally from a gentleman in fine linen; and he now pretends to have ability derived from the apostles, most probably from Judas, by marvelous manipulations—how, I cannot tell you—but by a kind of sleight of hand to settle the case. But the Mediator, with a frown, hurls a thunderbolt from His hand against the impudent impostor, and bids him take himself away, and not again deceive poor sinners with his vain pretensions. He warns the defendant that the priest is a complete evildoer, that whatever professions he may make of being a “successor of the apostles,” he knows nothing about apostolic doctrine, or else he would not have intruded his sinful, silly self, between men’s souls and God. He bids him advise the man to dress himself like a person

in his right mind who was about honest work, and not as a sorcerer or priest of Baal, and give himself to preaching the gospel, instead of propagating the superstitious inventions of Rome.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, “I see how the case stands; *I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff!* I confess that I have broken His commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve His wrath; but I have heard that He is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness.”

And now comes another scene. The plaintiff, seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, “I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to loving kindness with all My creatures; but will the mediator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin My own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie My own word; that I should imperil My own throne; that I should make the purity of immaculate justice to be suspect, and should bring down the glory of My unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended Me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty—*he has offended, and he must die!* ‘As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.’ Still, this ‘would rather’ must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay My own words. I swore with an oath, ‘The soul that sins shall die.’ I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, ‘Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’ This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I make you as Admah? How can I set you as Zeboim? And yet, how can I put you among the children?

Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish, than that the universe should lose the justice of God as its stay and shield.” The arbitrator bows and says, “Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have You unjust.”

What more does the mediator say? He sits still, and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the mediator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner, and anxious to devise a plan to save him, but conscious that that plan must not infringe upon divine justice; for it were a worse cruelty to injure divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race. The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing for a while, puts it thus—“I am anxious that these two should be brought together; I love them both—I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that My Father should stain His honor; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell. I will decide the case, and it shall be thus—I will pay My Father’s justice all it craves; I pledge Myself that, in the fullness of time, *I will suffer in My own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered.* My Father, will You agree to this?” The Eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What do you say, sinner, what do you say? Why, I think you cannot have two opinions. If you are sane—and may God make you sane—you will melt with amazement. You will say, “I could not have thought of this! I never called in a mediator with an expectation of this! I have sinned, and *He* declares that *He* will suffer; I am guilty, and *He* says that *He* will be punished for me!”

Yes, sinner, and He did more than say it, for when the fullness of time came—you know the story. The officers of

justice served Him with the writ, and He was taken from His knees in the garden of Gethsemane away to the court, and there He was tried and condemned; and you know how His back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore; you know how His head was crowned with thorns, and His cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see Him hounded through the streets of Jerusalem with the spit of the brutal soldiers still upon His unwashed face, and His wounds all bleeding? Can you not see Him as they hurl Him down and fasten Him to the accursed tree? Can you see them lift the cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth—dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew, filling His soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin, or the depths of the ocean filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what He suffered *within*. Hell held carnival within His heart; every arrow of the infernal pit of hell was discharged at Him, and heaven itself forsook Him! The thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon Him, and His Father hid His face from Him till He cried in His agony, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And so He suffered on, and on, and on, till, “It is finished,” closed the scene.

Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ Himself suffers; and now I have to ask the question, “Have you accepted Christ?” O dear friend, if you have, I know that God the Holy Spirit has made you accept Him; but if you have not, what shall I call you? I will not upbraid you—my heart weeps over you! How can you be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so divine! Oh, kiss the feet of the Mediator; love Him all your life, that He has decided the case so blessedly!

### III. Let us now look at **THE MEDIATOR’S SUCCESS.**

For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full atonement which God the Father has accepted; and His

success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because *the suit has been settled conclusively*. We have known cases go to arbitration, and yet the parties have quarreled afterwards; they have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again. But O beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and forever; there is no more conscience of sin left in the believer; and as for God's Book, there is not a sin recorded there against any soul that has received Christ! I know some of our Arminian brethren rather think that the case is *not* settled; or they suppose that the case is settled for a time, but that it will one day come up again. Beloved, I thank God that they are mistaken. Christ has not cast His people's sins into the shallows, where they may be washed up again; but He has cast them into the depths of the sea, where they are drowned forever! Our scapegoat has not carried our sins to the borders of the land where they may be found again, but He has taken them away into the wilderness where, if they are searched for, they shall not be found. The case is so settled that in eternity you shall never hear of it again except as a case which was gloriously decided.

Again, the case has been settled *on the best principles*, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him—even eternal justice cannot, for it has had its due. If there had been any mitigation of the penalty, we might yet fear that perhaps the suit might come up again; but now that everything has been paid, that cannot be. If my creditor takes from me, by a settlement in the Court of Insolvency, ten shillings in the pound, I know he will not disturb me again; but I cannot feel quite at ease about the other ten shillings; and if I am ever able, I would like to pay him. But, you see, Christ has not paid ten shillings in the pound, but He has paid every farthing—

“Justice now demands no more,  
He has paid the dreadful score.”

For all the sins of all His people He has made such a full and satisfactory atonement, that divine justice were not divine justice at all if it should ask to be paid twice for the same offense. Christ has suffered the law's fullest and most severe penalty, and there is now no fear whatever that the case can ever be revived, by writ of error, or removal into another court, because it has been settled on the eternal and immutable principles of justice!

Again, the case has been so settled, *that both parties are well content*. You never hear a saved soul murmur at the substitution of the Lord Jesus. If ever I get to see His face, I'll fall down before Him, and kiss the dust beneath His feet. Oh, if ever I see the Savior who has thus delivered me from ruin; if I have a crown, I will cast it at His feet, and never, never wear it; it must, it shall be His! I feel like the good woman who said that if Christ ever saved her, He would never hear the last of it; and I am sure He never shall, for I will praise Him as long as immortality endures for what He has done for me. I am sure that every saved sinner feels the same. And Jehovah, on the other side, is perfectly content. He is satisfied with His dear Son. “Well done!” He says to Him. He has received Him to the throne of glory, and made Him to sit at His right hand, because He is perfectly content with the great work which He has accomplished.

But, what is more and more wonderful still, *both parties have gained in the suit*. Did you ever hear of such a lawsuit as this before? No, never in the courts of man. The old story of the two oyster shells, you know, awarded to the plaintiff and defendant, while the oyster is eaten in court, is generally the result; but it is not so in this case, for both the plaintiff and the

defendant have won by the arbitration. What has God gained? Why, glory to Himself, and such glory as all creation could not give Him, such glory as the ruin of sinners, though so well-deserved, could not give Him. Listen how—

“Heaven’s eternal arches ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace!”

Angels, too, as well as those who have been redeemed, strike their harps which they have tuned afresh to a nobler strain, as they sing, “Worthy is the Lamb, and blessed is the eternal God!” And, as for us, the poor defendants, why, what have we NOT gained? We were men before—now we are something more than Adam was. We were “a little lower than the angels” before—now we are “lifted up far above all principalities and powers.” We were God’s subjects once, but this arbitration has made us His *children*! We were at our very best only the possessors of a paradise on earth, but now, we are joint-heirs with Christ of a paradise above the skies! Both sides have won, and both sides must therefore be blessedly content with their glorious Mediator.

And, to conclude—through this Mediator *both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest, and fondest bond of union*. This lawsuit has ended in such a way that the plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life—no, friends through death, and friends in eternity. How near God is to a pardoned sinner—

“So near, so very near to God,  
Nearer we cannot be.  
For in the person of His Son,  
We are as near as He.”

What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic Cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea, in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds, and now we are disappointed again. But oh, what an infinitely greater wonder *has been* accomplished! Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided, and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God's waves and billows had gone over Him, that He might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race—between the Most Holy One and poor sinners. Let me say to you, sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. It went down deep; the end was well secured, and it went down deep into the depths of our sin, and shame, and woe; and on the other side it has gone right up to the eternal throne, and is fastened there eternally fast by God Himself. You may work that telegraph today, and you may easily understand the art of working it too. A *sigh* will work it; a *tear* will work it. Say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and along the wire the message will flash and will reach God *before it comes from you*. It is far swifter than earthly telegraphs; yes, and there will come an answer back much sooner than you ever dreamed of, for it is promised—"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Whoever heard of such a communication as this between man and man; but it really does exist between sinners and God, since Christ has opened up a way from the depths of our sin to the heights of His glory!

This is for you who are at a distance from Him, but He has done more for us who are saved, for He has taken us right across the Atlantic of our sin and set us down on the other side—He has taken us out of our sinful state, and put us into



the Father's bosom—and there we shall dwell forever in the heart of God as His own dear children!

I would to God that some might now be led to look to the Savior—that some would come with weeping and with tears to Him, and say—

“Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Your bosom fly.’

Take my case and arbitrate for me; I accept Your atonement; I trust in Your precious blood; only receive me, and I will rejoice in You forever with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

May the Lord bless you forevermore. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Isaiah 53.***

## 662 CONSOLATION IN THE FURNACE – DAN. 3:25

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 26th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking  
in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt. And the form of  
the fourth is like the Son of God.” — Daniel 3:25

THE NARRATIVE of the glorious boldness and marvelous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth of God in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young men especially, since these were young men, learn from their example both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of integrity in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all, rather than lose your integrity, and when all else is gone, still hold fast to a clear conscience, as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal. It were no waste of time for the preacher to spend half-a-dozen mornings in insisting again and again upon the necessity of the Christian being obedient universally and constantly to the dictates of his conscience, for this is an age requiring sturdy independence and stern adherence to the truth. As to whether the most severe precision of integrity will turn out to be the best policy or not, I shall not care to dispute; I am talking just now, not to men guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of

policy, but by the pole star of divine light, and I beseech them to follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, then, walk by faith and not by sight.

I do pray you, beloved, in the Lord Jesus Christ; do my God the honor to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether He will be your debtor! See if He does not, even in this life, prove His Word, that “Godliness is great gain,” and that they who, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, shall have all these things added unto them.” Mark you, if in the providence of God, it should be the case that you are and continue to be, a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord pays you not back in the silver of earthly prosperity, He will discharge His promise in the gold of spiritual joy. And I would have you remember that a man’s life consists not in the abundance of that which he possesses. To have a clear conscience, to wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offense is greater riches, than the mines of Ophir could yield or the traffic of Tyre could win. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention. An ounce of heart’s ease is worth a ton of gold; and a drop of innocence is better than a sea of flattery; burn, Christian, if it comes to that, but never turn from the right way! Die, but never deny the truth of God! Lose all to buy the truth of God; but sell it not, even though the price is the treasure and honor of the whole world, for, “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?”

But my particular design in referring to the narrative this morning, was not to use the whole of it as an incentive to young Christians, by way of earnest advice, although I confess, I feel much inclined to do so; but I have this one verse on my mind, where the astonished despot saw his late victims quietly surviving the flames, which he intended for their instant destruction. I desire to use his exclamation as a consolation to

afflicted Christians everywhere. Concentrate, then, your thoughts on the words before us, and may the Holy Spirit be our instructor.

**I. We will commence by gazing into the place **WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE OFTEN ARE.****

In the text, we find three of them in a burning fiery furnace, and singular as this may be literally, it is no extraordinary thing spiritually, for, to tell the truth, it is the usual place where saints are found. The ancients fabled of the salamander, that it lived in the fire; the same can be said of the Christian without any fable whatever. The ancient church, in a favorite metaphor, described itself as a ship; where would the ship be, but in the sea? Now the sea is an unstable element, frequently vexed with storms; it is a troubled sea which cannot rest; and so the Christian finds this mortal life to be far from smooth and seldom settled. It is rather a wonder when a Christian is not in trial, for to wanderers in a wilderness, discomfort and need will naturally be the rule rather than the exception. It is through “much tribulation” that we inherit the kingdom of God. There is no life as joyous as that of a man bound for the Celestial City; and, on the other hand, there is no life which involves so much conflict as does the life of a pilgrim to the skies. The furnaces into which Christians are cast are of various sorts. Perhaps we may divide them into three groups.

First, there is *the furnace which men kindle*. As if there were not enough misery in the world, men are the greatest tormentors of their fellow men. The elements in all their fury, wild beasts in all their ferocity, and famine and pestilence in all their horrors, have scarcely proved such foes to man, as men themselves have been. Religious animosity is always the worst of all hatreds, and incites to the most fiendish deeds; persecution is as unsparing as death, and as cruel as the grave. The believer in Jesus, who is one of a people everywhere

spoken against, must expect to be thrown into the furnace of persecution by his fellow men. “If the world hates you,” says our Lord, “it hated Me before it hated you.” “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Some suppose that these words are out of date—old-fashioned words, words that refer only to apostolic times. I answer, you are out of the apostolic faith, or else you would painfully find them to be still standing in all their force. At times the Christian feels the heat of the furnace of *open persecution*. What multitudes of saints have mounted to heaven like Elijah, in a chariot of fire; their seraphic spirits found a safe way to heaven through the flames, for they were guarded by ministering spirits whom God has made as flames of fire. Thousands of the precious sons of Zion have been left to rot in dungeons, or have been slain upon the mountain side, or have perished in poverty and need; and to this day, there are many that endure trials of cruel mocking, and are in various painful ways made to bear the cross, for if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution.

Another furnace is that of *oppression*. In the iron furnace of Egypt, the children of Israel were made to do hard bondage in brick and in mortar; and doubtless, many of God's people are in positions where they are little better than slaves. Oppression is far from dead; under the most free form of government there is always a possibility for the heads of households and the masters of establishments, to practice the most galling oppression towards those whom they dislike; and doubtless, many choice spirits are still trod down, as straw is trod for the dunghill. There is also the furnace of *slander*. The ripest of fruit will be pecked at most by the birds; those who have most of God's image will have most of the world's contempt. Expect not that the world shall speak well of you, for it never gave your

Master a good word. “Shall the disciple be above his master, or the servant above his Lord?” Expect to be misunderstood—that is man’s infirmity; expect to be misrepresented—that is his willful hatred. A very strenuous effort is being made just now to mark our denomination with the famous “S. S.,” which was the old brand of the Puritan “Sower of Sedition.” This slander is very ancient, for in Nehemiah’s day the accusation ran, “This city of Jerusalem of old made sedition against kings,” and this is the charge now against our missionaries, and indeed the whole of us, that we are accomplices with those who stir up the people to sedition. Sirs, we shall not disclaim the fact that we are ever swift to vindicate the liberties of all men, and are little given to flatter tyrants whether in Jamaica, or elsewhere; on the contrary, our witness is very loud and clear that there is one Lord who will execute righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed. We hate the treading down of the needy, and we abhor wholesale butchery quite as much when perpetrated by Englishmen, as when laid to the door of Turks or Russians, and however unfashionable it may be, we maintain the opinion that liberty is the birthright of every man; not only the liberty which permits his neck to go free from a chain, but the liberty which allows the exercise of the rights of manhood.

Suffering humanity is to be aided even when it wears the ebony hue, and high-handed wrong is to be impeached, even when the much despised Negro is its victim. It can never be too much lamented that the terrible passions, excited by years of wrong, should have led to a riot so fierce and cruel, but we must remember that oppression makes even wise men mad, and in justice we must lay the onus of the outbreak not alone at the door of those unhappy and uneducated men, who were goaded to this passionate display of wrath, but we must give the greatest measure of blame to the men of standing, wealth, and education, who have laid grievous burdens upon these

people, and refused to hear their earnest cries and grant their justifiable demands. The infernal revenge taken by their enemies almost exonerates me from even this word of apology, for it alone is sufficient proof of the spirit which has dominated over the black race, and compelled the unhappy victims to rise against it. But of course, it will still be insisted that the Baptists are at the bottom of the outbreak, and so God's Church will be the scapegoat for offenders. We are the friends of liberty, but we never taught rebellion; we endeavor to implant manly principles of independence and freedom, but we put side-by-side the gentle precepts of the loving Jesus; yet scandals of every sort we expect to receive, and we count them no strange thing when they happen to us.

Secondly, there is a *furnace which Satan blows* with three great bellows—some of you have been in it. It is hard to bear, for the prince of the power of the air has great mastery over human spirits; he knows our weak places, and can strike so as to cut us to the very quick. He fans the fire with the blast of *temptation*. The evil one knows our besetting sins, our infirmities of temper, and how we can be most readily provoked. He understands how to pick his bait to his fish and his trap to his bird. At times the most earnest Christian will be compelled to cry out, "My steps had well near gone; my feet had well near slipped." The Savior went through this furnace in the wilderness, and was thrice tempted of the devil; and in the wilderness of this life God's people frequently experience temptations of the most horrible kind. Then he works the second bellows of *accusation*. He hisses into the ear, "Your sins have destroyed you; the Lord has quite forsaken you! Your God will be gracious no more!" He tells us that we are hypocrites, that our experience has been fancy, and that our faith is mere presumption; he tells us that our glorying has been a boast, and the very sins which, as a tempter, he himself incited us to commit, he brings against us

when he assumes his favorite character of “the accuser of the brethren.” Unless we are graciously comforted under the attacks of the roaring lion, we shall be almost ready to give up all hope. Then he will fill us with *suggestions of blasphemy*; for while tormenting us with insinuations, he has a way of uttering foul things against God, and then casting them into our hearts as if they were our own; he can sow the infernal seed of blasphemy in our souls, and then tell us that these are the native plants of our own hearts. He lays his black offspring at our door as if they were our own home-born children; and this sometimes is very hard to bear, when curses against God and His Christ will come across our soul; and though we hate them with perfect hatred, yet we cannot get rid of them.

And thirdly, *there is a furnace which God Himself prepares for His people*. There is the furnace of *physical pain*. How soon is the strong man brought low! We who rejoiced in health are in a few moments made to mourn and moan, not merely in weakness, but in pain and anguish. He only thinks little of pain who is a stranger to it. A furnace still worse perhaps is that of *bereavement*. The child sickens, the wife is gradually declining, the husband is struck down with a stroke, and friend after friend departs as star by star grows dim. We bitterly cry with Job, “Lover and friend have You put far from me, and my acquaintance unto darkness.” Then added to this, there will crowd in upon us *temporal losses and sufferings*. The business, which we thought would enrich, impoverishes. We build the house, but providence plucks it down with both its hands. We hoist the sail and seek to make headway; but we are driven far from the desired haven by a back wind. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.” I cannot multiply the description of these crosses which our heavenly Father in His mysterious providence lays upon His beloved ones. Certain is it, that like the waves of the sea, the drops of rain, the sands of



the wilderness and the leaves of the forest, the griefs of the Lord's people are innumerable. Into the central heat of the fire does the Lord cast His saints, and mark this, He casts them there because they are His own beloved and dearly loved people. I do not see the goldsmith putting dross into the furnace— what would be the good of it? It would be a waste of fuel and labor. But he thrusts the crucible full of gold into the hottest part of the fire and heaps on coals till the heat is terrible.

Some of you have no crosses; you are like Moab, “settled on your lees”—“You are not emptied from vessel to vessel,” because you are reprobate, and God cares not for you—but the pure gold is put into the furnace to make it purer, still. As silver is purified in a furnace of earth seven times, simply because it is silver, so are saints afflicted because of their preciousness in the sight of the Lord. Men will not be at such pains to purify iron as they will with silver, for when iron is brought to a tolerable degree of purity, it works well, but silver must be doubly refined, till no dross is left. Men do not cut common pebbles on the lapidary's wheel, but the diamond must be vexed again, and again, and again with sharp cuttings, and even so must the believer.

The context reminds us that *sometimes the Christian is exposed to very peculiar trials*. The furnace was heated seven times hotter; it was hot enough when heated once; but I suppose that Nebuchadnezzar had pitch and tar, and all kinds of combustibles thrown in, to make it flame out with greater vehemence. Truly at times the Lord appears to deal thus with His people. It is a peculiarly fierce heat which surrounds them, and they cry out, “Surely I am the man that has seen affliction—I may take precedence of all others in the realm of sorrow.” This is not so, remember, for princes have sat in the king's gate with their heads covered with ashes, and the best of

men who eat bread at Jehovah's table this day, have had to say, "You have filled me with wormwood, and broken my teeth with gravel." The path of sorrow is well frequented, beaten down, and trod by hosts of the chosen ones of God, who have found that the path of sorrow, and that path, alone, leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.

I do not want to leave this point without observing too, that these holy champions *were helpless when thrown into the furnace*. They were cast in tied up; and many of us have been cast in bound, too, so that we could not lift hand or foot to help ourselves. They fell down, it is said, into the midst of the furnace; and often a sort of fainting fit overtakes the saints of God at the beginning of their trouble—the very trouble in which, afterwards, they can rejoice; for the present fills them with heaviness, and they fall down bound into the midst of the furnace. Pretty plight to be in! Who does not shudder at it? Certainly none of us would choose it; but we have not the choice, and as we have said with David, "You shall choose my inheritance for me." If the Lord determines to choose it for us among the coals of fire, it is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him. Where Jehovah places His saints they are safe in reality, although exposed to destruction in appearance. That is the first point then—where God's people often are.

## **II. We proceed to the second—WHAT THEY LOSE THERE.**

Look at the text, and it will be clear to you that they lost something. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lost something in the fire—not their turbans, nor their coats, nor their shoes, nor one hair of their heads or beards—no, what then? Why, they lost *their bonds* there! Observe, "Did not we cast three men *bound* into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men *loose*, walking in the midst of the fire." The fire did not hurt them, but it snapped their bonds. Blessed loss, this! A true Christian's losses

are gains in another shape. Now, beloved, observe this carefully, that *many of God's servants never know the fullness of spiritual liberty, till they are cast into the midst of the furnace*. Many of them are bound and fettered till they get into the flame, and the flame consumes the bonds in which they had been willing to be held captives. Like the pure gold which loses nothing but its dross in the fire; like the iron which loses nothing but its rust under the file, so is the Christian—he loses what he is glad to lose, and his loss is blessed gain. Shall I show you some of the bonds which God loosens for His people when they are *in the fire of human hatred*? Sometimes He bursts the cords of fear of man, and desire to please man. Martin Luther, I dare say, like other men, had some respect for his own character, and some reverence for public opinion, and might have been willing to pay some deference to the learning and authority of the age, both of which lent their aid to the ancient system of Rome, but in a happy hour, the Pope excommunicated the German troublemaker. All is well for Luther now. His course is clear, and plain before his face! He must, therefore, never conciliate or dream of peace. Now his bonds are broken!

He burns the Pope's bull and thunders out, "The Pope of Rome excommunicates Martin Luther, and I, Martin Luther, excommunicate the Pope of Rome! The world hates me, and there is no love lost between us, for I esteem it as much as it esteems me. War to the knife," he says! The man was never clear till the world thrust him out. It is a splendid thing to run the gauntlet of so much contempt, that the soul is hardened to it under a strong consciousness, that the right is none the more contemptible because its friend may be despised. "Why," you say, "is this how I am treated for the statement of truth? I was inclined to conciliate and yield, but after this never! You have loosed my bonds." When man has done his worst, as Nebuchadnezzar did in this case, why then Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego, could say, “What more could he do? He has thrown us into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter; he has done his worst, and now what have we to fear?” When persecution rages, it is amazing what liberty it gives to the child of God. Never a more free tongue than Luther’s! Never a braver mouth than that of John Knox! Never bolder speech than that of John Calvin! Never a braver heart than that which throbbed beneath the ribs of Wickliffe! Never a man who could more boldly confront popery than John Bradford or Hugh Latimer! But under God these men owed their liberty, of speech and liberty of conscience, to the fact that the world thrust them out from all hope of its favor, and so loosened their bonds!

Again, *when Satan puts us in the furnace, he is often the means of breaking bonds.* How many Christians are bound by the bonds of frames and feelings; the bonds of dependence upon something within, instead of resting upon Christ the Great Sacrifice? When the devil comes with his sharp temptations, he roars out, “You are not children of God.” Why, what then? Why, then we go straight to Christ to look at and view the flowing of His precious blood, and trust Him just as we did at first; and now what about frames and feelings? What about emotions within? Why, we are so satisfied with that finished work upon the cross, that we feel the bonds of doubt and fear no more. Now we are free, because we have come to live on Christ, and not on self! Fierce temptations may be like waves that wash the mariner on a rock—they may drive us nearer to Christ. It is an ill wind which blows no one any good; but the worst wind that Satan can send, blows the Christian good, because it hurries him nearer to his Lord! Temptation is a great blessing when it loosens our bonds of self-confidence and reliance upon frames and feelings.

*As for the afflictions which God sends, do they not loosen our bonds?*

Dear brethren, doubts and fears are far more common to us in the midst of work and business, than when laid aside by sickness. I do not know how you have found it, but so it is, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Many believers sing most sweetly when providence clips their wings, or puts them in a cage; they are very mute, and their heart towards the Lord is very heavy, till they are involved in trouble; and then their faith revives, their hope returns, their love glows, and they sing God’s praises in the fire. Have not you, dear friends, frequently experienced trouble cuts the cords which bind us to earth? When the Lord takes away a child, there is one tie less to fasten to the world, and one band more to draw towards heaven. God has loosed you from the bonds of idolatry by removing your darling. You cannot idolize your little one any more, for it is taken away. When money vanishes, and business all goes wrong, we frequent the prayer meeting more, and the closet more, and read the Bible more—we are driven by all tribulation away from earth. If everything went well with us, we would begin to say, “Soul, take your ease,” but when things go amiss with us, then we want to be gone. When the tree shakes, the bird will not stay in the nest, but takes to its wings and mounts. Happy trouble that loosens our care of earth! Give you a few days of sharp pain on a bed of sickness, and you will not love life as much as you now do; you will begin to say, “Let me be gone.” Why, even selfishness makes you wish for that; then you can understand what David meant when he said his heart and his flesh cried out after God. It is hard to make the flesh cry out after God; but if you nip it well, turn the screw a little further, just stretch it on the rack a little more, the dumb, earthborn flesh, will begin to cry out that it may be gone and leave the pain and sickness behind it.

Thus, I think, I have shown you, though very briefly, for time fails us, that the saints lose something in the furnace which they are *glad* to lose—they are cast in bound, but amid the glowing coals, they are set at liberty.

**III. In the third place, WHAT SAINTS DO THERE.**

“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.” Walking! See those gardens so delightfully laid out with varying landscape, rippling fountains, blushing flowers, and odoriferous herbs, with quiet arbors every here and there, and soft reclining seats, and there with the voice of glee, young men and maidens walk. See that fair prospect! Turn here—a blazing furnace, so fiercely heated that the eyes feel as if scorched from their sockets as they look upon it; and the fervent heat comes pouring forth, as though old Sol had found a house on earth; yet there are four men walking in that furnace—walking in their ease! And there is greater joy as they walk among those sulfuric flames, greater mirth in their spirits, than in those young men and maidens who walk among the flowers! They are walking—a symbol of joy, of ease, of peace, of rest—not flitting like unquiet ghosts, as if they were disembodied spirits traversing the flame; but they are walking with real footsteps, treading on hot coals as though they were roses, and smelling the sulfuric flames as though they yielded nothing but aromatic perfume! Enoch “Walked with God.” It is the Christian’s pace, it is his general pace; he does sometimes run, but his general pace is walking with God, walking in the Spirit, and you notice that these good men did not quicken their pace, and they did not slacken it—they continued to walk as they usually did. They had the same holy calm and peace of mind, which they enjoyed elsewhere. Their walking shows not only their liberty, and their ease, and their pleasure and their calm, but it shows their strength. Their sinews were not snapped, they were walking. Sometimes God’s people, as Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, halt or

limp on their thigh; but I think it is only a small trouble for lame believers; a greater trial will set them right again. A stream of trouble may almost overturn a believer; but a flood of trials will make him rise as the ark rose, nearer to heaven. These men had no limping gait; they were walking, walking in the midst of the fire.

Now, for the explanation of all this, turn to the biographies of any of God's saints. There is an old Scotch volume entitled "Naphthali"—it is the lives of those people of God who hazarded their lives unto death in the high places of the field. Now, if you read "Naphthali," you will find that the greatest joy that ever could have been known in this mortal life was enjoyed by covenanters among the mosses and banks, and on the hillsides of Scotland. There is another blessed old book, which used to be chained in the churches side by side with the Bible—I mean *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Every family ought to have a copy of it, illustrated with pictures for the children to look at; and if you read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, you will see clearly that there was more joy in old Bonner's coal-hole, and in the Lollard's tower, than palaces kings have known. The martyrs felt a heaven of joy while they were suffering a hell of pain. One Samuel was kept starving for weeks, having bread and water given him alternately—three or four mouthfuls of bread one day, and no water; and the next day a few spoonfuls of water, and no bread. After he had been a little time in such a state as that, he fell into a perfect paradise of delight; he thought he heard an angel say to him, "Samuel, you have suffered thus painfully, and fasted, for the sake of your Lord; you shall soon feast with Him above—meanwhile you shall feast with Him below in your soul." Many and many a child of God has had an experience manifesting as clearly the loving kindness of the Lord. Yes, they were walking in the midst of the furnace. See Paul and Silas with their feet in the stocks, and their poor

bleeding backs on the stone damp floor of the Roman dungeon at Philippi, and yet they sing, and the prisoners hear them. Why, I think I would as soon have been with Paul and Silas, as with Peter when he was on the mountain. At any rate, the three holy children might have said to the fourth, who was their comforter and companion, what Peter said to his Lord—“Lord, it is good to be here; let us build three tabernacles, and dwell under the fiery roof of these boughs of flame; for it is happy to be where You are, though it is in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace.”

**IV. In the fourth place, WHAT THEY DID NOT LOSE THERE?**

The text says, “And they are not hurt.” They did not lose anything there. But we may say of them first, *their bodies were not hurt*. The child of God loses in the furnace nothing of himself that is worth keeping. He does not lose his spiritual life—that is immortal; he does not lose his divine graces—he gets them refined and multiplied, and the glitter of them is best seen by furnace light. The gifts of God the Holy Spirit to the Christian are not taken away by the fiery hands of flame. The Christian does not lose *his garments* there. You see their hats, and their shoes, and their coats were not singed, nor was there the smell of fire upon them; and so with the Christian—his garment is the beauteous dress which Christ Himself worked out in His life, and which He dyed in the purple of His own blood. This is wrapped about the Christian as his imperishable mantle of glory and of beauty—

“This sacred robe the same endures  
When ruined nature sinks in years;  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new.”



As it is not hurt by age, or moth, or worm, or mildew, so neither can it be touched by fire. When the saint shall come up to heaven, wearing Christ's righteousness, and the question is asked, "Who are these?" as the spirits gather around them, there shall be no traces upon them whatever, of any of the persecution or suffering through which they have been made to pass.

The Christian never loses a grain of *his treasure* when he passes through the furnace—in fact, to sum up in a word, *he loses nothing*. The empress threatened to banish Chrysostom. "That you cannot do," he said, "for my country is in every clime." "But I will take away your goods." "No," he said, "that you cannot do, for I am a poor minister of Christ, and I have none." "Then," she said, "I will take away your liberty." "That you cannot do, for iron bars cannot confine a free spirit." "I will take away your life," she said. "That you may do," he said, "in one sense, but I have a life eternal which you cannot touch." The empress thought she had better leave the man alone—she could do him no harm. So is it better for the enemy to leave the child of God alone, for he who kicks against God's people, only kicks with naked feet against the pricks; and as the ox smitten with the goad only hurts himself when he kicks against it, so shall it be with all who touch the saints of the Living God. They are not hurt, and they never shall be.

Now, it is hard for some of you to think that this will be the case, but thus it will be with all of you who truly put your trust in Jesus Christ. My brethren, I know you dread that furnace—who would not?—but courage, courage, courage, the Lord who permits that furnace to be heated, will preserve you in it, therefore be not dismayed. You would so wish to live as to have some tale to tell when you shall mount to heaven—you would not be silent there—coming to glory without any adventure to narrate before the throne? Now, you cannot be

illustrious without conflict—you cannot be a conqueror without fighting; you cannot by any possibility have anything to witness to the glory of God, unless you test and try the promises and the faithfulness of the Most High; and where can you do this except in the furnace of woe? Be of good courage, then—

“The flames shall not hurt you, I only design  
Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.”

**V. The last, and perhaps the most pleasing part of the text is, WHO WAS WITH THEM IN THE FURNACE?**

There was a fourth and He was so bright and glorious, that even the heathen eyes of Nebuchadnezzar could discern a supernatural luster about Him. “The fourth,” he said, “is like the Son of God.” What appearance Christ had put on which was recognizable by that heathen monarch, I cannot tell, but I suppose that He appeared in a degree of that glory in which He showed Himself to His servant John in the apocalypse, and such was the excessive splendor and brightness, the God-like air that was about Him, the flash of His eyes, and the splendor of His gait as He walked the fire with the other three, that even Nebuchadnezzar could not help saying He was like the Son of God. Beloved, you must go into the furnace if you would have the nearest and dearest dealings with Christ Jesus! Whenever the Lord appears, it is to His people when they are in a militant posture. Moses saw God at Horeb, but it was in a burning bush; Joshua saw Him, but it was with a drawn sword in his hand, to show that His people are still a militant people; and here, where the saints saw their Savior, it was as Himself in the furnace. The richest thought that a Christian perhaps can live upon is this—Christ is in the furnace with him! When you suffer, Christ suffers. No member of the body can be pained without the

head enduring its portion. And so you, a member of Christ's body, in every pain you feel, pains the Head, Christ Jesus. As Baxter says, "Christ takes us through no darker rooms than He went through before." And one could improve upon it and say, "He takes us through no rooms so dark but what He is, Himself, there in the darkness, and makes that darkness by His presence light, cheering and gladdening our hearts."

I know that to the worldling this seems a very poor comfort, but then, if you have never drank this wine you cannot judge its flavor. If the King has never taken you into His banqueting house, and His banner over you has never been love; if He has never kissed you with the kisses of His mouth; if He has never said unto you, "I am yours, and you are Mine," why, you cannot be expected to know what you have not experienced. But he who has once drunk of the well of Bethlehem, would hazard his life that he might get a draught of it again; would be willing to go through the furnace, though it were heated seventy thousand times hotter, that he might be able once more to see that Son of God, the fourth bright One who trod the glowing coals. The presence of Christ is the brightest joy beneath the stars. Oh, Christian, seek it; do not be content without it, and you shall have it!

A very unhappy thought starts up and claims expression before we close our discourse. I do not like to close with it, and yet faithfulness requires me to utter it—what must it be, to be cast into that fiery furnace without Christ in it! What must it be, to dwell with everlasting burnings! One's heart beats high at the thought of the three poor men being thrown into that furnace of Nebuchadnezzar's, with its flaming pitch and flames reaching upwards as though it would set the heavens on a blaze; yet that fire could not touch the three children—it was not a *consuming fire*. But, my hearers, be warned, there is one who is "a consuming fire," and once let Him flame forth in anger, and

none can deliver you! “Our God,” we are told, “Our God is a consuming fire.” The day comes which shall burn as an oven, and the proud, and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble, and every soul on earth who believes not in Christ Jesus shall be cast into that furnace of fire—this is the second death. Beware, you who forget God, lest the eternal fires of Tophet kindle upon you—for their flame searches the joints and marrow, and sets the soul upon a blaze with torment! For you, my hearers, who have often listened to the gospel, but heard it in vain, *for you* the furnace of divine wrath shall be heated seven times hotter, and you shall fall down bound into the midst of it, never to be loosened; and instead of having Christ then to be with you and to comfort you, you shall see Him sitting on His throne, and His glance of lightning shall perpetually make that flame burn more terrible, and yet more terrible! If you were thrown into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, it would be all over in a moment, not even your bones would be found; but the soul never dies. The punishment of the wicked is of the same duration as the reward of the righteous. Justice will always exist in the divine mind, and will always have objects upon which to display itself. If the soul died, hell would not be hell, for there would then be hope; and so the most terrible element of hopelessness would be removed.

Sinner, dream not of being annihilated, but dread the fire which never can be quenched, the worm which never dies. It is written in God’s Word that He, “is able to destroy both body and soul in hell,” a destruction which amounts not to annihilation, a destruction of everything that is true life, but which leaves existence still untouched—

“What? To be banished for my life,  
To linger in eternal pain,  
And yet forbid to die—

And yet forever die!”

Dreadful indeed is such a doom. There is a second death which will pass on all the ungodly, but it is not annihilation; for as death does not annihilate the body, so does not the spiritual death annihilate the soul—you shall lose life but never existence! You shall linger in perpetual death!

But there stands the Savior, and as He was with His people in the furnace, so He is near you this day in mercy, to deliver you from your sins. He calls to you to leave your sins, and look to Him, and then you shall never die, and neither upon you shall the flame of wrath kindle, because its power was spent on Him! He felt the furnace of divine wrath, and trod the glowing coals for every soul that believes in Him. God give His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Daniel 3.***

# 663 WALKING IN THE LIGHT AND WASHED IN THE BLOOD – I JOHN 1:7

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 3rd, 1865,  
by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” — I John 1:7

THERE ARE two great powers in conflict in this world. One is the power of good, of which God is the King, and the other is the power of evil, which is represented by the prince of the power of the air, even Satan. The first principle is set forth by John under the figure of *light*. God himself is essential light, and everything which is good in the world is an emanation from Himself. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” The light is the evident emblem of the truth of God; darkness is the symbol of error. Light represents holiness; darkness is the appropriate figure for sin. Light represents knowledge, especially of spiritual things, since light reveals; darkness is the fit token of the ignorance under which the natural mind labors perpetually. By nature, we are all born under the dominion of darkness—we grope our way like blind men, and when we knew God by the light of His works, we glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in our imaginations, and our

foolish heart was darkened. Naturally, spiritual things are not discernible by man, they are spiritual and spiritually discerned, and the carnal mind cannot perceive them, for it walks in darkness. The guilt of sin is a thing too high for the carnal mind to understand; the glory of the eternal sacrifice it cannot perceive. The excellence of God, the faithfulness of His promise and the validity of His covenant, all such things as these are swathed in mist, so that the carnal mind sees them not.

As soon as ever the grace of God comes into the heart, it makes as great a difference as did the eternal decree of Jehovah, when He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. As soon as God the Holy Spirit begins to work upon the soul of man to illuminate him, he perceives at once his own sinfulness, he abhors that sinfulness, he labors to escape from it, he cries out for a remedy, he finds it in Christ; therefore, he no longer loves sin. He is not guided any longer by the darkness of policy, and selfishness, and error, but he walks after the light of the truth of God, of righteousness, of holiness, of true knowledge. God has brought him into His light—he sees now what he never saw before; he knows, feels, believes, recognizes what he never had known anything of before—*he is in the light of God*. Therefore, you constantly find the Christian called a child of light, and he is warned that he is of the light and of the day. He is told, “You are not of the night, nor of darkness.” “You were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

You perceive in the text, then, that the Christian is spoken of as a man who is in the light. But there is something more said of him than this. He is practically in the light, “if we walk in the light.” It is of no use to pretend to have light in the brain—so as to comprehend all knowledge, so as to be sound and orthodox in one’s doctrinal opinions—this will be of no

vital service so far as the great point of *salvation* is concerned. A man may think he has much light, but if it is only notional and doctrinal, and is not the light of God which enlightens his nature, and develops itself in his practical walk, he lies when he talks of being in the light, for he is in darkness altogether. Nor is it truthful to pretend or profess that we have light within in the form of experience, if we do not walk in it, for where the light is true, it is quite certain to show itself abroad. If there is a candle within the lantern, its light will stream forth into the surrounding darkness, and those who have eyes will be able to see it. I have no right to say I have the light of God unless I walk in it. The apostle is very peremptory with those who so speak. He says, “He who says I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” The Christian, then, is in the light, and he is *practically* in it; his walk and conversation are regulated by the truth of God, by holiness, and by that divine knowledge which God has been pleased to bestow upon him. He walks in the light of faith, in another path than that which is trod by men who have nothing but the light of sense. He sees Him who is invisible, and the sight of the invisible God operates upon his soul; he looks into eternity. He marks the dread reward of sin, and the blessed gift of God to those who trust in Jesus, and eternal realities have an effect upon his whole manner and conversation—from now on, he is a man in the light, walking in that light.

There is a very strong description given here—“If we walk in the light as *He is in the light*.” Beloved, the thought of that dazzles me. I have tried to look it in the face, but I cannot endure it. If we walk in the light as God is in the light. Can we ever attain to this? Shall poor flesh and blood ever be able to walk as clearly in the light of God as He is whom we call, “Our Father,” of whom it is written, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”? Let us say this much, and then commend this



wonderful expression to your meditations. Certainly, this is the model which is set before us, for the Savior Himself said, “Be you perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect,” and if we take anything short of absolute perfection as our model of life, we shall certainly, even if we should attain to our ideal, fall short of the glory of God. Beloved, when a schoolmaster writes the copy at the head of the page, he does not expect that the boy will come up to the copy; but then if the copy is not a perfect one, it is not fit to be imitated by a child; and so our God gives us Himself as the pattern and copy, “Be you imitators of God as dear children,” for nothing short of Himself would be a worthy model. Though we, as life sculptors, may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, yet we are to seek after it, and never to be satisfied until we attain it. The youthful artist, as he grasps his early pencil, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michelangelo, but still, if he did not have a noble ideal before his mind, he would only attain to something very mean and ordinary. Heavenly fingers point us to the Lord Jesus as the great Exemplar of His people, and the Holy Spirit works in us a likeness to Him.

But what does it mean that the Christian is to walk in light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import likeness, but not degree. We are as truly in the light, we are as heartily in the light, and we are as sincerely in the light, as honestly in the light, though we cannot be there in the same degree. I cannot dwell in the sun—it is too bright a place for my residence—unless I shall be transformed, like Uriel, Milton’s angel who could dwell in the midst of the blaze of its excessive glory, but I can *walk* in the light of the sun though I cannot dwell in it; and so God is the light. He is Himself the Sun, and I can walk in the light as He is in the light, though I cannot attain to the same degree of perfection, and excellence, and purity, and truth in which the Lord, Himself, resides. Trapp is always giving us the truth of

God in a way in which we can remember it—so he says we are to be in the light as God is in the light for *quality*; but not for *equality*; we are to have the same light and as truly to have it, and walk in it as God does, though as for *equality* with God in His holiness and perfection—that must be left until we cross the Jordan and enter into the perfection of the Most High.

Having thus briefly sketched the character of the genuine Christian, observe, beloved, that he is the possessor of two privileges. The first is *fellowship with God*. “We have fellowship one with another.” And the second is *complete cleansing from sin*—“and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

The first privilege we will have but a word upon—it is *fellowship with God*. As you read this verse in our translation, it looks very much as if all that was meant was fellowship with your brother Christians; but this, according to able critics, would not convey the sense of the original. The Arabic version renders it, “God with us, and we with Him,” and several copies read, “We have fellowship with Him.” Our version almost compels you to think of fellowship with other believers, but such is not the intention of the Spirit. “We have mutual fellowship, between God and our souls—there is communion.” This is the sense of the passage. God is light—we walk in the light of God—we agree. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” It is clear we are agreed as to the principles which we shall advance—God is the champion of truth, so are we; God is the promoter of holiness, so are we; God seeks that love may reign instead of selfishness, so does the Christian. God hates error, and spares no arrows to destroy it. The Christian also contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. God is pure, and the pure in heart shall see God. God is holiness, and those who are holy are attracted to God from an affinity of nature, even as the needle is attracted to its pole. If

the Lord has visited you and made you to walk in His light, you shall surely have fellowship with God your Father. He who is in darkness cannot have fellowship with God. Veiled in ignorance, guided by passion, controlled by error, led astray by falsehood—how can you aspire to talk with your God? Your prayer is but a chattering sound; your song is the clang of a sounding brass, the noise of a tinkling cymbal! Your devotion bears you no further than the letter which kills; but oh, poor soul, if God should take you out of your darkness, and make you to see yourself, to see Him and follow after truth and righteousness and holiness, why then your prayer would be heard in heaven, your song would mingle with the sweet notes of celestial harps, and even your groans and tears would reach your Father's heart, for you would enjoy fellowship with Him. If we walk with God as God is in the light, the secret of God is with us, and our secret is with God. He opens His heart to us and we open our heart to Him—we become friends—we are bound and knit together so that being made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, we live like Enoch, having our conversation above the skies.

Upon the second privilege we intend to dwell. I have been driven to this text, and yet I have been afraid of it. This text has been handled, the latter part of it, I mean, very often out of its context. Yet it has had such a comforting influence on many souls that I have been half afraid to discourse upon it in its true context, and yet I have felt, "Well, if anything I should say should take away any comfort from any seeking soul, I shall be very sorry, but I cannot help it." I do feel that it is essential to the Christian ministry not to pick passages out of God's Word and tear them away from the context, but to take them as they stand. As this text stands, it does not seem to me to gleam with the particular ray of comfort which others see in it, but it has

another beam of joy even more radiant. God's Word must be taken as God speaks it—we have no right to divide the living child of divine truth, or wrest it to make it mean other than it does. According to the text, special pardon of sin is the peculiar privilege of those who walk in the light as God is in the light, and it is not the privilege of anyone else. Only those who have been brought by divine grace from a state of nature into a state of grace, and walk in the light of God, may claim the possession of perfect cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ.

In dwelling upon this latter part of the verse, there seemed to me to be seven things in it which any thoughtful reader would be struck with. Considered as the privilege of every man who, however limpingly, is walking in the light, this word, which tells of pardon bought with blood, is very precious—a crown set with jewels; to seven choice pearls, I invite your loving gaze.

1. The first thing that struck me was **THE GREATNESS** of everything in the text.

In some places, everything is little—you can talk with some men—their thoughts, their ideas are all little; almost everything is drawn to a scale, and aspiring minds generally draw their matters to as great a scale as they can find, but that is necessarily a little one. See to what a magnificent scale everything is drawn in our text! Think, Beloved, *how great the sin of God's people is!* Will you try and get that thought into your minds, how great is your own sin—your sin before conversion—think that over—your sin while seeking the Lord, in putting confidence in your own works and looking after refuges of lies. Your sins since conversion—turn them over. Beloved, one sin towers up like an Alp, but we have many sins heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain. O God, what a mass of sin is there in the life of one of Your most pure and most sanctified

children! Multiply this; all the sin of one child of God—multiply it by the number of those contained in that word, “*us*.” “Cleanses *us* from all sin!” How many are God’s children? God’s Word shall answer, “A multitude that no man can number, out of all kindreds and peoples and tongues stood before the throne.” Can you imagine—deep as hell’s bottomless pit; high as heaven’s own glory, for sin sought to pluck even God out of His throne; wide as the east is from the west; long as eternity is this great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Christ shed His blood! And yet all this is taken away! “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Then, observe *the greatness of the atonement offered*. Will you inwardly digest those words, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son”? Blood is at all times precious, but this is no blood of a mere *man*—it is the blood of an innocent man—better still, it is the blood of man in union with Deity—“His Son!” God’s Son! Why, angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround His glorious throne. “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” And yet He yields His blood; takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and then is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last, slain; for nothing but the blood of Deity could make atonement for human sin. The atonement must be no man, merely—He must be the God-man Mediator, the fellow of Jehovah, co-equal and co-eternal with Him—He must bear the pangs and bitterness of divine wrath which was due to sin. Think of this—a sacrifice which no human mind can ever properly estimate in the infinity of its value! Here, indeed, we have greatness—great sin, but a great atonement!

Think again—*we have here great love which provided such a sacrifice*. Oh, how He must have loved, to have descended from heaven to earth, and from earth to the grave! How He must have loved, to have chosen us, when we were hating Him—when we were

enemies, He has reconciled us unto God by His own death! Dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt, wrapped up in the grave clothes of evil habits, hateful and hating one another, full of sin, and every abomination, yet He loved us so as to yield up His soul unto death for us. We are dealing with great things here indeed, and we must not forget *the greatness of the influence which such an atonement, the result of such love, must have upon the Christian's heart*. Oh, the greatness of the peace which passes all understanding, which flows from this great atonement! Oh, the greatness of the gratitude which must blaze forth from such a sacred fire as this! Oh, the greatness of the hatred of sin, of the revenge against iniquity, which must spring from a sense of such love, when it is shed abroad in the heart! You are citizens enjoying no mean privilege, oh, you blood-bought citizens of a blood-bought city. God has loved you. You cannot, though I should allot you a whole lifetime—you cannot get to the depth of that love. God has loved you, and to prove His love, He has died in the person of man for you. He loves you, and has overcome the dread result of all your fearful sin; and now, by the love which God has manifested, we do pray you let your holiness, your truthfulness, and your zeal, prove that you understand the greatness of those things. If your heart can really conceive the greatness of the things here revealed—the great sin, the great Savior, offering Himself out of great love, that He might make you to be greatly privileged—I am sure your hearts will rejoice.

2. The next thing which sparkles in the text is its **SIMPLE SOLITARINESS**—"We have fellowship one with another." And then, it is added as a simple, gloriously simple, statement, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Observe, there is nothing said about rites and ceremonies. It does not begin by saying, "And the waters of baptism, together with the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us"—not a

word, whether it shall be the sprinkling in infancy, or immersion of believers, nothing is said about it—it is the blood, the *blood* only, without a drop of baptismal water! *Nothing is here said about sacraments*—what some call, “the blessed Eucharist,” is not dragged in here—nothing about eating bread and drinking wine—it is the blood, nothing but the *blood*—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son.” And if nothing is said of rites that *God* has given, rites that *man* has invented are equally excluded! Not a syllable is uttered concerning celibacy or monasticism; not a breath about vows of perpetual chastity and poverty; not a hint about confession to a priest and human absolution, not an allusion to penance or extreme unction. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

It was well done by a poor woman who, as she lay sick, heard for the first time the precious gospel of her salvation. She was told that the blood alone cleansed from sin; she believed, and then, putting her hand into her bosom, she took out a little crucifix which she had always worn, hanging from a chain about her neck, and said to the preacher, “Then I don’t need this, sir.” Ah, truly so, and so may we say of everything that man has devised as a consolation to a poor wounded spirit. “I have found Jesus, and I do not need that, sir.” You who need it, keep it—but as for us, if we walk in the light as He is in the light— the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, so completely purges us from all sin, that we dare not look to anything else lest we come into the bondage of the beggarly elements of this world.

You will perceive, too, that *nothing is said about Christian experience as a means of cleansing*. “What?” says one, “Does not the first sentences of the verse imply that?” Assuredly not, for you perceive that the first sentence of the verse does not interfere, though it is linked, with the other; if I walk in the light as God is in the light, what then? Does my walking in the light of God

take away my sins? Not at all! I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness, if it were possible for me to be in the light without being washed in the blood. Well, but we have fellowship with God, and does not having fellowship with God take away sin? Beloved, do not misunderstand me! No man can have fellowship with God unless sin is taken away—but his fellowship with God, and his walking in the light of God, does not take away his sin—not at all. The whole process of the removal of sin is here, “And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” I beg to repeat it—the text does not say that our walking in the light cleanses us from sin, it does not say that our having fellowship with God cleanses us from sin—these are the result of cleansing, but they have no connection as cause and result—it is the blood, and the *blood alone* which purges us from sin.

The dying thief looked to Christ, and sin was taken away by the blood; and there is a brother in Christ here, who has had such an experience of Christ’s love for 60 years, that his heart is now like a shock of corn, ripe for heaven. he lives in his Master’s presence, he spends the most of his time in his Master’s service; but, beloved, there is not a single atom of difference between him and the dying thief, so far as the cleansing away of sin is concerned. The blood cleansed the thief, and the same blood washes this advanced and full-grown Christian, or otherwise he is still unclean.

Observe, yet again, that in the verse *there is no hint given of any emotions, feelings, or attainments as co-operating with the blood to take away sin*. Christ took the sins of His people, and was punished for those sins, as if He had been Himself a sinner, and so sin is taken away from us. But in no sense, degree, shape or form, is sin removed by attainments, emotions, feelings, or experiences. The blood is the *only* atonement—the blood,



without any mixture of anything else, completes and finishes the work, “For you are complete in Him.”

Now I could enlarge for a very long time on this point, but I do not think I shall. I will rather throw into a sentence or two a little direction, and observe that, whereas there are some who urge you to look to your doctrinal intelligence as a ground of comfort, I beseech you, beloved, look only to the blood! Whereas there are others who would set up a standard of Christian experience and urge that this is to be the channel of your consolation, I pray you, while you prize both doctrine and experience, rest not your soul's weight but in the precious blood. Some would lead you to high degrees of fellowship; follow them, but not when they would lead you away from the simple position of a sinner resting upon the blood. There are those who could teach you mysticism, and would have you rejoice in the light within— follow them as far as they have the warrant of God's Word, but never take your foot from that Rock of Ages, where the only safe standing can be found. Certain of my brothers are very fond of preaching Christ in His second coming—I rejoice that they preach the truth concerning Christ glorified, but, my beloved, I do beseech you, do not place your hope on Christ glorified, nor on Christ to come, but on “Christ crucified.” Remember that in the matter of taking away sin, the first thing is not the throne, but the cross—not the *reigning* Savior—but the *bleeding* Savior; not the King in His glory, but the Redeemer in His shame. Care not to be studying dates of prophecies if burdened with sin, but seek your chief, your best comfort in the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin—here is the pole star of your salvation—sail by it and you shall reach the port of peace.

3. A third brilliant flash in the light of God, namely, **THE COMPLETENESS** of the cleansing. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from *all sin*”—not from some sin, but,

“from *all* sin.” Beloved, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this Word, but I pray God the Holy Spirit to give you a taste of it. There is original sin, by which we fell in Adam before we were born, and there is inherited sin through which we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity; there is actual sin—the sin of my youth and my former transgressions, the sins of my riper years, the sins which defile the hoary head, and make that which should be a crown of glory to be a crown of grief—but all these sins, original and actual, are *all gone! All gone!* Sins against the law, though they are exceedingly broad, so that they make me a sinner in thought, in word, in deed, in heart—they are all gone. Sins against the gospel, when I kicked against the pricks, when I stifled conscience, when I resisted the Holy Spirit as did also my fathers—when I hated the truth of God, and would not have it because my deeds were evil, and I would not come to the light lest my deeds might be reproved; sins when I would regard none of the sweet invitations of the gospel—all cleansed away! Sins against Christ Jesus since my conversion, when I have backslidden and my heart has been cold towards Him; sins against the Holy Spirit, when I have followed my own impulses instead of the indwelling Deity—all gone!

The Roman Catholic divides sin into venial sins and mortal sins. Be it so—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from *all sin*, mortal or venial, deadly or pardonable. Sins of commission—here is a long catalog—think it over; sins of omission—that is still a larger list! The things which we have left undone which we ought to have done are probably more numerous than the things which we have done which we ought not to have done—all are gone! Some sins are greater than others. There is no doubt whatever that adultery, fornication, murder, blasphemy, and such like are greater than the sins of daily life—but whether they are great sins or little sins—they are all gone! That same

God who took away the plague of flies from Egypt also took away the plague of thunder and of lightning. All are gone—gone at once! Pharaoh's chariot is drowned in the Red Sea, and the mean Egyptian is drowned in the same way. The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left. There are sins against God—how many there are! Sins of breaking His day and despising His Word—profaning His name, forgetting Him, and not loving Him—but He blots out all! Sins against my friends and my enemies, against my neighbor, against my father, my child, my wife—sins in all relationships—yet all are gone! Then, too, remember there are sins of presumption, and sins of ignorance—sins done willfully, and unknown sins—the blood cleanses us from ALL sin! Shall I go on? Surely I need not! But you see the purging is complete. Whether the bill is little or the bill is great, the same receipt can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and divine a payment for the sin of blaspheming Peter as it is for the sin of loving John, and our iniquity is gone, all gone at once, and all gone forever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon!

4. The next gem that studs the text is the thought of **PRESENTNESS**. "Cleanses" says the text—not "*shall cleanse*." There are multitudes who think that, as a dying hope, they may look forward to pardon, and perhaps, within a few hours of their dissolution, they may be able to say, "My sins are pardoned." Such can never have read God's Word, or, if they have read it, they have read it with unbelieving eyes. Beloved, I would not give the snap of my finger for the bare possibility of cleansing when I come to die. Oh, how infinitely better to have cleansing now! Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment after many years of Christian experience. For a young Christian to say, "My sins are forgiven," seems to them to be an untimely fig, ripe too soon; but, beloved, it is not so.

The moment a sinner trusts Jesus, that sinner is as fully forgiven as he will be when the light of the glory of God shall shine upon his resurrection countenance. Beloved, forgiveness of sin is a present thing—a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour; and whoever walks in the light, as God is in the light, has fellowship with God, and has, at this moment, the perfect pardon of sin.

You perceive that it is written in the present tense as if to indicate continuance—it will always be so with you, Christian. It was so yesterday—it was “*cleanses*” yesterday, it is “*cleanses*” today—it will be “*cleanses*” tomorrow. It will be “*cleanses*” until you cross the river—every day you may come to Christ, this fountain, for it “*cleanses!*” Every hour you may stand by its brim, for it “*cleanses.*” I think there is sanctification here as well as justification. I am inclined to believe that this text has been too much limited in its interpretation, and that it signifies that the blood of Jesus is constantly operating upon the man who walks in the light of God so as to cleanse him from the indwelling power of sin; and the Spirit of God applies the doctrine of the atonement to the production of purity, till the soul becomes completely pure from sin at the last. I desire to feel every day the constantly purifying effect of the sacrifice of my Lord and Master. Look at the foot of the cross, and I am sure you will feel that the precious drops cleanse from all sin.

5. Now, in the fifth place, the text presents to us very blessedly the thought of **CERTAINTY**. It is not, “Perhaps the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin.” The text speaks of it as a *fact* not to be disputed—it does do so. To the believer, this is matter of certainty, for the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God. Our spirit, in the joy and peace which it receives through believing, becomes assured of its being cleansed, and then the Spirit of God comes in as a second witness and bears witness with our spirit that we are

born of God. My being cleansed from all sin today is to me as much a matter of consciousness as my being better in health. I was conscious of pain when I lay on my sick bed, and so when I was living in sin, as soon as God gave me spiritual life, I was conscious that guilt lay heavily upon me; I am conscious now of pain removed, and so I am equally conscious of sin removed, and I do not hesitate to say it here, that my consciousness of pardoned sin is, at this moment, as clear and as distinct as my consciousness of removed pain, while I look at Jesus Christ, my Lord, by faith.

So is it often with the Christian. It is frequently with him a matter of consciousness most positive and infallible that he is truly and really cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ; and it is not merely a matter of consciousness, but if you think of it, it is a matter of reasoning. If Jesus Christ did indeed take the sins of all who believe, then it follows, necessarily, that I, trusting in Christ, have no longer any sin—for if Christ took my sin—sin cannot be in two places at once. If Christ bears it, then I do not bear it; and if Christ was punished for it, then the punishment of my sin has been endured, and I cannot be punished for the sin for which Jesus has been punished—unless God should sovereignly punish men—which would be such an insult to the honesty and justice of God, that it must not be tolerated for a moment in our thoughts! If Jesus Christ has paid the debt, it is paid, and—

“Justice can demand no more,  
Christ has paid the dreadful score.”

So the Christian's being cleansed from sin becomes to him a matter of spiritual argument—he can see it clearly and manifestly.

Yet more, he is so certain of it that it begins to operate upon him in blessed effect. He is so sure that there is no sin laid to his door that he draws nearer to God than a sinner defiled with sin, may do. He enters into that which is within the veil—he talks with God as his Father; he claims familiar communion with the Most High God; and though God is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet he believes that that same God lives in his heart as in a temple. Now, this he could not feel if he did not know that sin is put away. Beloved, no man is capable of virtue in the highest sense of the term till it is a matter of certainty to him that his sin is cleansed. You say, “That is a strong assertion,” but I do assert it—all of you who are doing good works with the view to saving yourselves are missing the mark of pure virtue. You say, “Why?” The goodness of an action depends upon its motive. Your motive is to save yourselves—that is selfish—your action is selfish, and the virtue of it has evaporated. But the Christian, when he performs good works, does not perform them with any view whatever of merit or self-salvation. “I am saved,” he says—“perfectly saved. I have not a sin in God’s Book against me—I am clean. Great God, before Your bar I am clean through Jesus Christ—

‘Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn.’

What can I do to prove to all mankind how much, how truly I love my God?” You see, then, that this must be a matter of certainty, or else it will never have its right effect upon you. And I pray God that you may suck the certainty out of this text and taste its sweetness to your own soul’s inward contentment, and be able to say, “Yes, without a doubt, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

6. I hope I shall not weary you, but a few words upon the sixth gem which adorns the text, namely, the **DIVINITY** of it. “Where?” asks one. Does not divinity gleam in this text? Does it not strike you that the verse is written in a God-like style? The God-like style is very peculiar. You can tell the style of Milton from the style of Wordsworth, or the style of Byron. Read a verse, and an educated person knows the author by the ring of the sentences. The God-like style is unique in its excellence. You need never put the name at the bottom when the writing is of the Lord. You know it by the very style of it. “Light be! Light was.” Who speaks like that but Deity? Now, there is a divine ring about this sentence—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Why, if *man* were talking of so great an atonement, he would fetch a compass; he would have to go round about. We cannot afford to say such great things as these in a few words; we must adopt some form of speech that would allow us to extol the truth and indicate its beauties. God seems to put away His pearls as if they were but common pebbles. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin”—as if it were as much a matter of common work as for a man to wash his hands.

Notice the simplicity of the whole process. It does not seem to take weeks or months—it is done at once! Slowly and by degrees is man’s action—we must lay the thing to soak, to fetch the color from it, subject it to many processes, and expose it to the wind, and rain, and frost, and sun before it can be cleansed. But here, God speaks and it is done. The blood comes into contact with the guilty conscience, and it is all over with sin. As if it were but a handful that moves a mountain of sin, He takes up the isles as a very little thing; He counts great oceans of our sin as though they were but a drop in a bucket. Believing in Christ in a moment, by the divine and majestic

process which God has ordained, we get the perfect cleansing of sin.

7. In the last place, just a hint upon the **WISDOM** of the text. What a wise way of cleansing from sin the text speaks of! Beloved, suppose God had devised a plan for pardoning sin which did not turn the sinner's face to God; then you would have a very amazing spectacle; you would have a sinner pardoned by a process which enabled him to do without his God—and it strikes me he would be worse off than he was before. But here, before ever the sinner can receive pardon, he must say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." And he must come closer into contact with God than he ever came before. He must see God in the flesh of Christ, and must look to Him if he would be saved. I do bless God that I have not to turn my face to hell to get pardon, but I have to turn my face towards heaven; that seems to me to be the wise way, for while it takes away the sin which was like a disease, it takes away the distance from God which was the true root of that disease; it turns the sinner's face in the direction of holiness and bliss.

Observe the benefit of this plan of salvation in the fact that it makes the sinner feel the evil of sin. If we were pardoned in a way which did not involve pain to someone, we would say, "Oh, it is easy for God to forgive it." But when I see the streaming veins of Jesus, and mark the sweat of His blood fall to the ground, and hear Him cry, "They have pierced My hands and My feet," then I understand that sin is a dreadful evil. If a man could be pardoned without being made to feel that sin is bitter, I do not know that he would be really any the better off—perhaps better unpardoned than pardoned, unless he is led to hate sin.

Our gracious God has also chosen this plan of salvation with the wise design of making man glorify God. I cannot see sin pardoned by the substitutionary atonement of the Lord



Jesus without dedicating myself to the praise and glory of the great God of redeeming love. It would be a pity if man could be pardoned, and afterwards could live a selfish, thankless life, would it not? If God had devised a scheme by which sin could be pardoned, and yet the sinner lives to himself, I do not know that the world or the man would be advantaged. But here are many birds killed with one stone, as the proverb puts it. Now therefore, at the foot of the cross, the bands which bound our soul to earth are loosened. We are strangers in the land, and therefore, “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world.”

I leave this text with the believer, only adding, if any of you would have it, and joy in it, you must walk in the light of God. I pray God the Holy Spirit to bring you to see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; then you will trust Him, and then you shall have fellowship with Him, and by His blood you shall be cleansed from all sin. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
1 John 1; 2:1-11.***

## **664 EARLY AND LATE – MATT. 20:1-6**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 10th, 1865,**  
**by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. . . And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. . . Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’”— Matthew 20:1, 3, 5, 6

WE HAVE FREQUENTLY observed that we do not think it right to neglect the context of Scripture. We have no right to tear passages of Scripture from their context, and make them to mean what they were not intended to teach. And therefore I have, in the reading given you, according to my ability, what I think to be the immediate design of the present parable. It is a rebuke to those who fall into a legal spirit and begin calculating as to what their reward ought to be in a kingdom where the legal spirit is entirely out of place, since its reward is not of debt, but of divine grace. I think I may now, without any violation of propriety, dwell upon one very distinct fact in connection with the parable. It is not right to violate the drift of the parable, but having already observed it, and made it as clear as we can, we believe, that we are now authorized to make use of one of the main circumstances mentioned in it.

This morning I intend to call your attention to the fact that the laborers were hired at different periods of the day, by which doubtless, we are taught that God sends His servants into His vineyard at different times and seasons; that some are called in early youth, and others are not led to enter into the service of the Master, until declining years have brought them almost to the eventide of life.

I must, however, ask you to remember that *they were all called*—by the mention of which, the Savior would teach us that no man comes into the kingdom of heaven of himself. Without exception, every laborer for Jesus has been called in one sense or another, and he would not have come without being so called. They are all called. Were a man what he should be, he would need no pressing and invitation to come to the gospel of Christ; but since human nature is perverted, and men put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness, man needs to be called by the outward word; he needs to be invited, persuaded, and entreated; he needs, to use the strong expression of the apostle Paul, to be told that as though God did beseech him by us, we should pray him, in Christ's place, to be reconciled to God. No, further than this, although some men come to work in a legal spirit in the vineyard through this common call of the gospel, yet no man in spirit and in truth, comes to Christ without a further call, namely, the effectual call of God's Holy Spirit. The general call is given by the minister; it is all that he can give. If the preacher attempts to give the particular call as some of my hyper-Calvinistic brothers do, confining the gospel command to a certain character, and trying to be, themselves, the discoverers of God's elect, and to make that particular which is always universal; if the preacher acts thus and virtually endeavors to give the particular call, he makes a sorry mess of it, and usually

fails altogether to preach the gospel of glad tidings to the sons of men.

But when man is content to do what he can do, namely, preach the commandment, “that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and that, “God commands all men everywhere to repent,” then, there comes with the general call to the chosen of God, a particular and special call which none but the Holy Spirit can give, but which He gives so effectually, that all who hear it become willing in the day of God’s power, and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord. In what sense is it true that many are called, but few chosen, if none are to be called by the preaching of the word but those who are chosen? There are two callings, the one is general, to all who hear of Jesus, and many who are thus called are not chosen; the other is personal and peculiar to the elect, “For whom He did predestinate them He also called.” To return to our point; all in the vineyard are in some sense called. There is not a solitary exception to this rule in the entire Christian Church. The doctrine of freewill has not a single specimen to show to prove it; there is not a sheep in all the flock that came back to the shepherd unsought; there is not a single piece of money which leaped again into the woman’s purse. She swept the house to find it—no, I will go further and say, there is not even a single prodigal son in the entire family who did ever say, “I will arise and go unto my Father,” till first the Father’s divine grace, veiling itself in the afflicting providence of a mighty famine, had taught the prodigal the miserable results of sin as he fed the swine, and gladly would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but could not do so.

I want you to notice another fact before I come to the subject now in hand, and that is, that *all those who are called are said to have been hired*. Of course, in a parable, no word is to be construed harshly; we are to give the meaning according to the

drift; but still, I think we may say that there is this likeness between hiring a servant, and the engagement of a soul to Christ—that a man hired has no right to serve another, he serves the master who has hired him. When a soul is called by grace into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, he cries, “O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me, but now You only will I serve.” He plucks off the yoke of sin, its pleasure, its custom, and he puts upon him that yoke of which the Master says, it is easy, and he bears that burden which Jesus tells us is light. A hired servant must not work for another, he works for his master, and so a man who is called by grace, lives not for any sinister objective or motive, but for his Master only. A hired servant, again, does not work on his own account, he is not his own master; and, “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” Henceforth, though he calls no man, “Master,” on earth, yet he remembers that one is his Master in heaven, to whom all his service is due. There is a compact between the hired man and his master, and there is a solemn compact of spirit, between the true believer and his Lord. We have devoted ourselves to His service; we have given up all liberty of self-will, and therefore, our will is at the government of our Lord, and all our powers and passions are to be, we hope will be, through God’s grace, obedient to Him who has hired us into the vineyard.

Now the word, “hired,” was used in order to bring in the idea of reward. It was used to suit Peter’s view of the case; it was used in order that his legal question of, “What shall we have, therefore?” might be clearly brought out, and its folly shown in the light of that sovereign grace which does as it wills with His own. Yet for all that, believers are hired in an evangelical sense—they do not serve God for nothing—they shall not work without a reward. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” We shall have our reward

for what we do for the Master, and though it is not wages in the sense of debt, yet verily I say unto you, there shall not be a single true-hearted worker for God, who shall not receive of his Master most blessed wages of grace, in the day when He comes to take account of His servants.

Now to the point—*the master calls these hired servants of his at different hours of the day*; and, in the second place, *distinguishing grace shines forth in each case*, and is illustrated, and made more manifest in its varieties of glorious compassion and loving-kindness, by the different hours at which the chosen ones are called.

#### **I. ALL ARE NOT CALLED BY GRACE AT THE SAME TIME.**

Some, according to the parable, are called *early in the morning*. Thrice happy are these! The earliest period at which a child may be called by divine grace would be difficult for us to define positively, because children are not all the same age mentally, though their physical age may be the same, and even in the matter of mental development, we dare not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the chosen period of operation. As far as our observation, grace works upon some little ones at the very dawn of moral consciousness. There are, no doubt, precocious children, whose intellect and affections are very much developed, and very deeply sanctified, even as early as two or three years of age. Such children usually are intended by the Master to be taken home at once. There are interesting biographies existing, which prove that holiness may bloom and ripen in the youngest heart, and many anecdotes are treasured up in such collections as *Janeway's Token for Children*, of children whom I might call infants with strict propriety, out of whose mouth God ordained praise and did, through them, quiet the enemy and the avenger.

Little prattlers, whose tongues it would have been supposed could only have talked of toys, have been able to speak with an apparent depth of knowledge of spiritual, and

especially, of heavenly things. It is certain that some have worked their day's work for the Master in their mother's arms; they have spoken of the Savior in tones which have melted a mother's heart and gone to a father's conscience, and then they have been taken home. "Whom the gods love, die young," said the heathen, and doubtless it is no small privilege to be so soon admitted into glory. Only shown on earth, and then snatched away to heaven—too precious to be left below! Precious child, how dear were you to the good God who sent you here and then took you home! Fair rose bud, yet in the perfection of your young beauty, taken to be worn by the Savior on His bosom! How can we mourn your translation to the skies?—

"No bitter tears for you are shed,  
Blossom of being seen and gone!  
With flowers alone we strew your bed,  
O blest departed one!  
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,  
Blushed into dawn and passed away."

"Early in the morning," would also include those who have passed the first hour of the day, but who have not yet wasted the second opening hour. I mean those hopeful lads and girls who, perhaps, would rather I should call them youths—those who have reached their teens, have overleaped infancy and childhood, and are growing up in the heyday and vigor of youth. Youngsters still more at home in the playground, than in the work field—fitter, as Satan tells them, to be sporting in the marketplace, than busy in the vineyard; such as these, to the praise of divine love, are often hired by the landowner. It is worthwhile to warn some of our brothers and sisters, who seem to be exceedingly dubious of boyish and girlish piety—to warn them against indulging harsh and suspicious doubts. We have

remarked, and I think those who have watched our membership carefully will have remarked it, too, that among all the slips and falls which have caused us sorrow, we have had but little sorrow from those who were added to us as boys and girls. There are those preaching the gospel this day with acceptance and power, whom these hands baptized into Jesus Christ very early in their boyhood, and there are among us, honored servants of God who have served this Church well, who, while they were yet at school, were joyful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. With our earliest intellects some of us got an understanding of the things of the kingdom of God; our Bible was our child's primer, our spelling book, the guide of our youth, and the joy of our earliest years. We thank God that there are Timothys still among us, and those not few and far between; and young Samuels, who, being brought as infants to the Lord's House, have from that day forth, worn the linen ephod and served after their fashion as priests unto God, serving Him with all their hearts. Happy those who are called early in the morning! They have peculiar reasons for blessing and praising God—

“Grace is a plant, wherever it grows,  
Of pure and heavenly root;  
But fairest in the youngest shows,  
And yields the sweetest fruit.”

Let us spend a minute in thinking of their happy case, which are saved in boyhood. Early in the morning the dew still twinkles on the leaves, the maiden blush of dawn remains and reveals an opening beauty, which is lost to those who rise not to see the birth of day. There is a beauty about early piety which is indescribably charming and unutterably lovely in freshness and radiance. We remark in childhood an artless simplicity, a



child-like confidence which is seen nowhere else. There may be less of knowing, but there is more of *loving*; there may be less of reasoning, but there is more of simply *believing* upon the authority of revelation; there may be less of deep-rootedness, but there is certainly more of perfume, beauty, and emerald verdure. If I must choose that part of the Christian life in which there is the most joy, next to the land Beulah, which I must set first and foremost, by reason of its lying so near to Canaan, I think I would prefer that tract of Christian experience, which lies toward the rising sun, which is sown with orient pearls of love, and cheered with the delicious music of the birds of hope. Early in the morning, when we have just risen from slumber, work is easy; our occupation in the vineyard is a cheerful exercise rather than toil, such as those find who bear the burden and heat of the day. The young Christian is not oppressed with the cares and troubles of the world as others are—he has nothing else to do but to serve his God. He is free from the embarrassments, which surround so many of us and prevent our doing good, when we would consecrate ourselves wholly to it. The lad has nothing to think of but his Lord. There are his books and his lessons, but he can be fervent of spirit in the midst of them. There are the companions of his childhood, but in guilelessness and simplicity, he may be of service to them, and to God, through them. Give me, I say, if I would have an auspicious time to work for Jesus—give me the blessed morning hours, when my heart is bounding lightest and joy's pure sunbeams tremble on my path; when my glowing breast lacks no ardor, and my happy spirit wears no chain of care.

One would prefer early conversion, because such persons have not learned to stand idle in the marketplace. A fellow, you know, who has been for hours standing with his hands in his pockets, talking with drunken men and so on, is not worth much at the eleventh hour, no, even by the middle of the day,

it has become so natural to him to prop the walls, that he is not likely to take to work very readily. Begin early with your souls! Break in the colts while they are young, and they are likely to take well to the collar. There are no workers like those who commenced work while they were yet children. What a promise of a long day there is for young believers; the sun has just risen, and he has to travel to his zenith and to descend again. There is ample room and time enough, though none to spare. If God, in His providence, permits it so to happen, that youngster yonder has 12 hours' work before him—what may he not accomplish? For a grand and glorious life, early piety, if not essential, is certainly a very great advantage! To give those first days to Jesus will spare us many sad regrets, prevent us acquiring many evil habits, and enable us to achieve good success through the Holy Spirit's blessing. It is well to begin to fly while yet the wings are strong, for if we live long in sin, the wings may be broken, and then they will flap wearily through the rest of our days, even when divine grace shall call us. Let it be the desire of parents here, to have their children converted as children! And oh, may God cast that desire into the hearts of some of you young people who are here this morning, that before you reach twenty-one, before you are called adults, you may be perfect men and women in Christ Jesus; that while you are yet children, you may be children of God. May you, as "newborn babes, receive the sincere milk of the word," and the Lord grant that you may "grow thereby." Happy, happy, happy souls, whom the Master, thus by distinguishing grace, brings "early in the morning!"

The landowner went out again *at the third hour*. This may represent the period in which we have mounted above being children and youths, and are entitled to be called men. Suppose we settle the first hour as extending over the earliest seven or eight years of age; then the second hour runs on from that to

21 or thereabouts; and then we have a good length of time between 20 and 30 and onwards to reckon as the third, and fourth, and fifth hours. There are some whom divine grace renews at the third hour. This is late! Twenty-one is grievously late, when you consider how much of early joy is now impossible, how much of sinful habit has now been acquired, how many opportunities for usefulness are now gone past recall. A quarter of the day has flown away forever when we reach the third hour. It is the best quarter of the day, too, that has gone past recall. The first meal of the day is over—that blessed breaking of the fast with Christ is no more possible. A very precious meal is that, when the Savior gives us the morning portion, the manna which melts when the sun is up. Blessed is the child's feeding upon Jesus—truly, I remember when I was awakened like Elijah from under the juniper tree, and fed on such dainty fare, that to this day, the flavor abides with me. The man of 21 has lost that first meal, breakfast is all over; Christ will say to him as He will to some others, "Come and dine," and that is precious; but the daintiest meal is over, the first early enjoyment, the first early rapture can never be known.

I have no doubt, there are many here who think that to be converted at 21 is very soon; but why 21 years given to Satan? Why a fourth of man's existence devoted to evil? Besides, it may not be a fourth, it may be one half, no, in how many cases it is the whole of life. The sun goes down before it is yet noon, and the idler in the marketplace has no hope of ever being a worker in the vineyard. Death, which comes when God wills, and gives us no notice, may cut down the flower before it has fully opened. "In the morning it is like grass that grows up, in the evening it is cut down and withers." It is late, it is sadly late! It is a sad thing to have lost those bright days in which the mind was least engaged, in which it was the most susceptible of

forming godly habits. It is a sad thing to have learned so much of sin as one may have learned by twenty-one, a sad thing to have seen so much of iniquity, to have treasured up in one's memory so much defilement. Twenty years with God; one might have been in such a time a good scholar in the kingdom; but 20 years in the world, one begins to be like scarlet that has been lying in the dye till it is stained through and through. *It is late, but we thank God that it is not too late.* No, it is not too late even for the grandest of purposes. Not only is this period of life not too late for salvation, but it is not too late to do much for Jesus Christ. Some of us, when we were twenty-one, had finished five years of Christian ministry, and had been the means of bringing many souls to the cross of Christ; but if others are led by grace to begin then, why there is a good period still remaining if God, in providence, spares our lives. The young man is now in all his strength and vigor, his bones are full of marrow, and his heart is full of fire. He ought to have acquired a good degree of education, and be prepared to acquire more.

Now he is just in the time when he should work. His plans of life are not settled as yet; he is probably not married; as yet there are no children about him to have been injured by his evil example; he has an opportunity of rearing up a household in the fear of God. He is beginning business, he has an opportunity of so conducting that business, that there may never need to be a time, when he shall have to tack about and steer another course. He may, if called by God's grace at twenty-one, begin an honorable career, in which there needs not be an angle or a curve, but he may steer straight to the harbor's mouth, and mark upon the sea of life one shining furrow which shall reach in a direct line, from the present moment, straight to the lights of heaven, which He will reach with his sail full and a priceless cargo on board to the praise of

the glory of divine grace. It is late, it is very late in some respects, but oh, it is not too late to serve the Master well, and to win a crown of great reward, the gift of divine love.

There is abundance of work to do for us who are in this third, fourth, and fifth hour of the day. In fact, I suppose the church must look to us for its most active work. After this period and the next, a man frequently becomes rather a recipient from the church, than a donor to it in the matter of activity. Its fresh blood, its energy, its warmth of heart, its ready action, must, to a great extent, come from the young men who are converted. Oh, you of twenty-one, I would to God that you were all born from heaven! You maidens, in your early beauty—may the Master in His infinite mercy bring you in! Oh, could you know the sweetness of His love, you would not need persuading! Could you understand the joy of true religion, you would not need entreating! There is more hallowed mirth enjoyed in secret with the Lord Jesus Christ, than in all the merriment the world can yield. One ounce of Christ's love is better than a ton of the world's flatteries. The world offers bubbles with fair hues, bright to look upon, but vanishing at a breath; but Christ gives real treasure, enduring as eternity. The world's gold is all base money—it glitters, but it is not precious. There may be less glitter about the things of God, but there is a "solid joy and lasting pleasure," which "none but Zion's children know." May the Master come this morning to your hearts, and by my simple words may He call you at the third hour of the day into the vineyard.

The landowner's kindness was not exhausted, and therefore, *he went out at the sixth hour*. We find him going into the market at high noon. Half the day was over. Who is going to employ a man and give him a whole day's wages when twelve o'clock has come? He will not do too much if you hire him at six—what will he do if you engage him at twelve? Half a day's

work! That is a poor thing to seek or to offer. The Master, however, seeks and accepts it. He promises, “Whatever is right, I will give you.” And there are some found who at the sixth hour enter into the vineyard and, being saved by grace, begin their work for Jesus. This may represent the period of life in which man is supposed to be in his prime—when he is past 40 and onward. *This is sadly late, very sadly late.* Sadly late in a great many respects, not only because there is so little time left, but because so very much of energy, and zeal, and force, which should have been given to God, has been wasted. They have, to some extent, been used to fight against God. Forty years of hardness of heart! That is a long time for divine patience. Forty years of sin! That is a long season for conscience to mourn over. “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation,” said God. In the wilderness they hardened their hearts all that time, and He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. What a blessing for you of 40 and unconverted, that He has not sworn so terrible an oath concerning you—that still His long-suffering lingers, still His patience bears with you, still does He say to you, “Go, work, My son—go work this day in My vineyard.”

It is sadly late, because it has become more than natural to you to walk in the way of sin. You will have so much to contend with in the future as the result of the past. Putting the ship of the soul about is not such easy work as turning a vessel by her helm—only a divine hand can steer a soul upon the tack of divine grace. You will need much grace to conquer those corruptions which have had 40 years to take root in you. You have a tenant in your house who is in possession, and you will find that possession, to be nine points of the law; it will be a hard ejection for you to effect, so hard, indeed, that only a “stronger than he” can cast him out. To your dying day, the recollection of evil things which you heard during these 40

years of unregeneracy will stick to you; you will hear the echoes of an old song just when you are trying to pray, and some deed which you regret and mourn over, will come to check you just when you are about to say, “Abba, Father,” with an unstammering tongue. It is late, it is very, very late, this sixth hour; *but it is not too late!* It is not too late for some of the richest enjoyments—you can yet dine with Jesus; He can yet manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world; you may have yet much time to serve Him. It is not too late to be distinguished among His servants.

Take John Newton; he was called in the middle of the day, but John Newton left his mark in God's vineyard, a mark that will never be forgotten. I suppose Paul could not have been much less than of that age when he was called by sovereign grace. No, the most of the apostles were probably very little short of this age, when mercy met with them; still they did a glorious day's work. If saved by grace in middle life, my brother, my sister, you must work harder, you must let the time past suffice you to have worked the will of the flesh, and now you must redeem the time, because the days are evil. Why, a man or woman converted at 40 should go double quick march to heaven—there should not be a moment lost! Work the engine at high pressure, and give two strokes for every one that might be given by younger men and younger minds. Seek, in divine strength, to do twice as much in the time, since you have only half the time to do a life's work. I know you wish to win crowns for Christ; then be up and doing, beloved. You are saved by grace, and by grace alone. You pant to honor Christ because of His free love to you—cannot you endeavor to honor Him as much in the remnant which remains, as others do in the whole length of their life? You may, by zeal, and prudence, and discretion, and perfect consecration, yet serve the Master well.

The landowner *went out at the ninth hour*, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Nobody thinks of engaging day-laborers at three o'clock in the afternoon. A day's work to be done from three till six! It shows you that this gospel hiring is nothing like a legal hiring; it must be *all* of grace, or a man would not think of doing such a thing. Well now, three o'clock in the afternoon, that is from 60 to seventy. The prime of life has gone. *It is late; it is sadly late, very sadly late.* It is late because all the powers of the man are now weak. His memory begins to fail; he thinks his judgment better than ever it was, but probably that is only his own opinion. Most of the faculties lose their edge in old age. He has acquired experience, but still, there is no fool like an old fool; and a man who has not been taught by divine grace, learns very little of any value in the school of providence. Sixty thousand years would not make a man wise if divine grace did not teach him. Now think of it, is it not late? Here is the man—if he is converted now, what is there left of him? He is just a candle end. He may give a little light, but it is almost like a snuff burning in the socket. All those 60 years, 70 years have been spent—where? Cover it all up. Let us go backward as Noah's sons did, and cover it all up; and oh, may almighty grace cover it, too! The fact is terribly appalling—sixty, 70 years spent in the service of Satan! Oh what good the man might have done! Had he but served his God as he served the world, what good he might have done! He has made a fortune, has he? How rich he might have been in faith by this time. He has built a house! Yes, but how he might have helped to build the church. The man has been playing at card-houses; he has been like boys by the seashore, building castles of sand which must all come down, and must come down very soon, too, for I hear the surges of the dread tide of death—it is rolling in even now! Those teeth which have fallen out, those pains and his rheumatism and so on, all show that *this* is not his rest. The



tabernacle is beginning to crumble about the man, and the warning is loud which reminds him that he must soon be gone, and leave his wealth and his house!

And so, if this is all, in the end it will turn out that he has done nothing—he has piled up shadows, heaped together thick clay and that is all he has done—when he might, if he had believed in Jesus, have done so much for God, and for the souls of men! What evil habits he has acquired! What can you ever make of this man? If he is saved, it will be so as by fire. He is called, and he shall enter heaven, but oh, how little can he do for the Master, and what strong corruptions will he have to wrestle with, and what an inward conflict even till he gets to heaven! It is late, it is very late, but oh, blessed be God! *It is not too late!* We have had within these walls persons who have long passed the prime of their days, who have come forward and said, “We will cast in our lot with you because the Lord is with you.” We have heard their joyous story of how the old man or woman has become a babe, and how he who was hoary with years has been born-again into the kingdom of Christ! It is not too late. Did the devil say so? The gate is shutting—I can hear it grating on the hinges, but it is not shut! The sun is going down, but he is not lost beneath the horizon yet; and if the Master calls you, only run faster because it is so; and when you are saved, serve Him with all your might and strength because you have so little time to glorify Him here on earth, and short space in which to show your sense of deep indebtedness to His surpassing love.

The day is nearly over; *it has come to the 11th hour*, five o’clock! The men have been looking at their watches to see whether it will not soon be six; they are longing to hear the clock strike; they hope the day’s work will soon close. Look! The landlord goes out into the marketplace among those hulking fellows who are still loitering there, and he pitches upon some, and asks

them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day? Go and work! And whatever is right I will give you.” At the 11th hour they come in—half-ashamed to come I will be bound—hardly liking the others to see them; ashamed to begin work so late. Still they did steal in somewhere; and there were generous laborers who looked over the tops of the vines, and said to them, “Glad to see you, friends! Glad to see you, however late.” There were a few, I dare say, among the laborers, at least there are if this is the vineyard, who would even stop their work, and begin to sing and praise God to think that their fellows had been brought in at the 11th hour! Now the 11th hour must be looked upon as any period of life which is past threescore years and ten; how late it may extend I cannot tell. There is an authentic instance of a man converted to God at the age of a 104, during the last Irish revival, who walked some distance to make a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. And I recollect a case of one converted in America by a sermon which he had heard, I think, 81 years previously. He was 15 when he heard Mr. Flavell at the end of a discourse, instead of pronouncing the blessing, say, “I cannot bless you; how can I bless those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ? ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.’” And 81 years or more afterwards, that solemn sentence came to the man’s recollection when he was living in America—and God blessed it to his conversion!

There have been some to whom the 11th hour has been the very hour of death. Some, I say, but how many or how few is not for me to know. There is one instance we know in Scripture, it was the dying thief. There is but one; God, however, in His abundant mercy can do as He wills to the praise of the glory of His grace, and at the 11th hour He can call His chosen. It is very late, it is very, very, very late, it is sorrowfully late, *it is dolefully late, but it is not too late*, and if the

Master calls you, come—though a hundred years of sin should make your feet heavy so that your steps are painfully limping. If He calls you it is late but not too late, and therefore come! Have you ever thought of how the thief worked for his Lord? It was not a fine place for working, hanging on a cross, dying, just at the 11th hour; but he did a deal of work in the few minutes. Observe what he did. First, he confessed Christ—he acknowledged Him to be Lord, confessed Him before men. In the second place, he justified Christ—“This Man has done nothing amiss.” In the next place he worshipped the Lord Jesus, calling Him, “Lord.” He even began to preach, for he rebuked his fellow sinner! He told him that he should not revile one who was so unrighteously condemned. He offered a petition which has become a very model of prayer—“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” At any rate, I wish I could say of myself what I can say of the thief—*he did all he could*. I cannot say that of myself. I am afraid I cannot say it of any of you. I do not know anything the thief could have done on the cross which he did not do. As soon as ever he was called, he seems to have worked in the vineyard to the utmost extent of his ability; and so let me say to you, if you should be called at the 11th hour, my dear hearer, though you are well in years and aged, yet for Jesus Christ’s sake, out of great love for all the great things which He has done for you, go your way and praise Him with all your might.

**II.** My time has gone, and I wanted to have shown that **DISTINGUISHING GRACE SHONE RESPLENDENTLY IN EVERY INSTANCE**. Those called in the early morning have delightful reason for admiring sovereign grace, for they are spared the ills and sins of life. I must content myself, however, by repeating concerning them the lines of Ralph Erskine—

“In heavenly choirs a question rose,

That stirred-up strife will never close—  
What rank of all the ransomed race,  
Owes highest praise to sovereign grace?  
Babes there caught from womb and breast,  
Claimed right to sing above the rest;  
Because they found the happy shore,  
They never saw nor sought before.”

What distinguishing grace is that which called us when we were young! Here is electing love, “When Ephraim was a child then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.” Some of us, in time and in eternity, will have to utter a special song of thankfulness to the love which took us in our days of folly and simplicity, and conducted us into the family of God. It was not because we were better disposed children than others, or because there was naturally anything good about us—we were willful, heady, and high-minded, proud, wayward, and disobedient as other children are—and yet mercy separated us from the rest, and we shall never cease to adore its sovereignty!

Look at the grace which calls the man at the age of twenty, when the passions are hot, when there is strong temptation to plunge into the vices and the so-called pleasures of life. To be delivered from the charms of sin when the world’s cheek is ruddy, when it wears its best attire, and to be taught to prefer the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt—this is almighty grace for which God shall have our sweetest song.

To be called of the Lord at forty, in the prime of life. This is a wonderful instance of divine power, for worldliness is hard to overcome, and worldliness is the sin of middle age. With a family about you, with much business, with the world eating into you as does a canker, it is a wonder that God should, in His mercy, have visited you then, and made you a regenerate

soul. You are a miracle of divine grace, and you will have to feel it and to praise God for it in time and eternity!

Sixty, again. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? If so, then you who are accustomed to do evil may learn to do well.” And yet you have learned, you have had a blessed schoolmaster who sweetly taught you, and you have learned to do well. Though your vessel had begun to rot in the waters of the Black Sea of sin, you have got a new owner, and you will run up a new flag, and you will sail round the Cape of Good Hope to the islands of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter!

But what shall I say of you who are called when you are aged? Ah, you will have to love much, for you have had much forgiven. I do not know that you may be in thankfulness a whit behind those of us who are called in our early youth; we have much to bless God for, and so have you. We are at one extreme and you are at the other; we would love much because we have been spared much sinning, and you must love much because you have been delivered from much sinning. Not to go through the fire is a theme for song; but to traverse the flame and not be burned, to walk the furnace and to be delivered from its vehement fire, oh, how you should find words with which to express your gratitude! Called early or called late, called at midday or called at early noon, let us together, since we have been called by grace alone, ascribe it all to the Lord Jesus, and moved by the mighty constraints of His love, let us work with body, soul, and spirit—work for Him till we can work no longer, and then praise Him in the rest of glory!

I pray you, brethren, allow no idleness to creep over you. If you have sought to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, do it more. Give more, talk more of Christ, pray more, and labor more! I often receive the kind advice, “Do less.” I cannot do less. Do less? Why, better rot altogether than live the inglorious

life of doing less than our utmost for God! We shall, none of us, I am afraid, kill ourselves with working too hard for Jesus—it were such a blessed act of suicide that if there is a sin that is venial, it would certainly be that! I am not afraid that you are likely to perpetrate such an enormity. Work for the Master! Labor for the Master! We must spend and be spent, and wear ourselves out for Him! Make no reserve for the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it! And oh, how happy shall we be if we may be privileged to finish the work, and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.”

May the Lord bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Matthew 19:27-30; 20:1-29.***

# **665 OPEN HOUSE FOR ALL COMERS –**

## **LUKE 15:2**

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**A Sermon**

**Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 17th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“This man receives sinners, and eats with them.” — Luke  
15:2**

IT IS NOT very unusual that the Pharisees could not understand the Savior's mode of action—not only because self-righteousness and bigotry had blinded their eyes, and callousness of heart to the interest of others and had bound them up in the darkness of self-righteousness, but also because the Savior's mode of acting was contrary to the general current of the dispensation to which the Pharisee had been accustomed. The dispensation of the old covenant was that of distance. When God appeared to His servant Moses, it was, “Draw not near here: take off your shoes.” And when He manifested Himself upon Mount Sinai to His own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, “You shall set bounds about the mount, and if so much as a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart.” In the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of distance must always have been prominent to the devout mind. The mass of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court, none but the priests could

ever dare to come; while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, once a year, one person only ever entered. A thick costly veil hung before the manifestation of Jehovah's presence, and upon the Shekinah, no mortal eye ever gazed, except that eye which, once a year, alone, dared to look upon its splendor through the mist of the smoking incense, when the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the mercy seat. The Lord seemed always to be saying to the whole of His people, with but a few exceptions, "Come not near here." It was the dispensation of distance; as if the Lord, in those early ages, would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him, that He must treat men as lepers put outside the camp, and when He came nearest to them, yet He made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and the impure sinner.

But Jesus Christ came on quite another footing. The word, "Go," was now exchanged for, "Come," and distance was made to give place to nearness; partitions were broken down, middle walls of separation became like tottering fences, and we, who sometime were afar off, were made near by the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. Christ was surrounded with that divinity which does hedge about a king, but it was only as a hedge of thorns to Himself, and not as a hedge of briars to keep off the approach of the meanest of mankind. "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—that is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh. Not now does He teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by suffering the penalty of man's defilement; not now does He teach man that the disease is naturally incurable—He now shows him the heavenly cure by revealing the fact that God, without sully His purity, can come into contact with impurity in order to its removal, and without receiving contagion from the arch-leper, the devil, can grapple with him



in the human heart, and lay hold upon His adversary that He may bind him hand and foot, and cast him away from men, no more to oppress our race. Jesus ushered in the dispensation of nearness, which, as you all know, is to be followed by one of greater nearness still, for, as God is very near to us spiritually, the day draws near—oh, hasten it, good Lord!—when the angels shall sing, “The tabernacle of God is with men and He does dwell among them.” When we shall need no temple in which Deity can be enshrined, for the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the temple of universal manhood, and we shall see Him face to face, and days of distance and of mourning shall be ended. I do not wonder, then, that Pharisees, who had drunk very deep into the separating spirit of the law, should have been perfectly astounded that a person, claiming to be the Messiah, and professing to be that Adonai who sits at the right hand of Jehovah till His enemies are made His footstool—should, as they thought, act so inconsistently with His own professions, and constantly allow a mob of the dross, and scum, and raff of the population to be associated with Him! They, therefore, said, “This man receives sinners,” and worse still, He breaks through all rules of caste, and all degrees of separateness, and makes Himself so familiar that He actually eats with them.

Now, this truth, which so startled them, has become very familiar to those of us who have been received and have eaten with Him; but still, the sinner, trembling under a sense of sin, feels the spirit of the old law like a black cloud hovering over him, and he can hardly venture to believe, much less to understand in all its richness of mercy, that Jesus still receives sinners. He fosters the notion that Jesus will look for some good thing in him, and demand at least some redeeming trait in character, some act of penitence, some holy resolution, something or other which may mitigate guilt, and conciliate regard; but the abstract truth of God that this man receives

sinners as such and eats with them, needs to be proclaimed again, and again, and again, that the ears of unbelieving, mistrustful men may at last receive it—and that their hearts may feel its power. May God the Holy Spirit bless our attempt this morning, and His shall be the praise.

Now, first of all, *Jesus receiving sinners*; and secondly, *Jesus eating with them*.

**I. First, then, JESUS RECEIVING SINNERS.**

*This was and is a great fact*—our Lord received, and still receives sinners. He permits them *to form a part of His congregation, and even to draw near to hear Him*. A philosopher wrote over the door of his academy, “He who is not learned, let him not enter here.” But Jesus speaks by Wisdom in the Proverbs, and says, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here: as for him who lacks understanding, let him eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled” (Prov 9:4, 5). He bids the simple come and learn at His feet. Moral teachers have always been choice in the selection of their followers, and have thought it a degradation, and a casting of pearls before swine, to throw their useful maxims, their invaluable dogmas as they dream them to be, before the vulgar herd, the sinful crowd. But this man receives sinners. Whatever other men may do, *this man*, this one, this one alone, if no other with Him, this one beyond all other teachers, however gentle and compassionate—this man receives sinners. He will speak and tell out His mysteries too, even when sinful ears are listening, for He receives sinners *as His disciples*, as well as His hearers. If they come casually into the throng, His eyes glance upon them, and He has a word of gentle rebuke and wooing love; but if they will come and join the class who cluster constantly about Him, they shall be thoroughly welcome, and the deeper and higher truths reserved for disciples shall be revealed to them, and they shall know the

mystery of the kingdom of God. When He has cleansed sinners, He receives them not only as disciples, but as *companions*.

This man permits the guilty, the once profane, the lately debauched, and formerly dissolute, to associate themselves with Him, to wear His name, to sit in His house, to be written in the same Book of Life with Himself. He makes them here partakers with Him in His affliction, and hereafter, they shall be partakers with Him in His glory. This man receives pardoned sinners into companionship. No, more, He receives them *into friendship*. The head that leaned upon His bosom was a sinner's head, and those who sat at the table with Him, to whom He said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," were all of them, sinners, as they felt themselves to be. She who bore Him, she who ministered to Him of her substance, she who washed His feet with tears, she who was first at His empty sepulcher—all these were sinners, and some of them emphatically sinners. Into His heart's love He receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill, and wears them as jewels in His crown, plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as precious monuments of His mercy; and none are so precious in His sight as the sinners for whom He died. When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some outside reception place where He charitably entertains them for a time, as great men may do passing beggars, but He opens the big golden gates of His own heart, and He takes the sinner right into Himself—yes, He admits the sinner into personal union with Himself, and makes the sinner a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this. This fact is still the same—He is *still* receiving sinners.

This fact must not excite your unbelief because of its strangeness. I know the world, sinful as it is, does not receive sinners. When her character is gone, the fallen woman is pointed at in the streets, and no decent society will entertain

her; but this man receives harlots when their good name and fame has long since become a thing of the past. When the man has played the rogue, and the prison has confined him, there are few among his fellows who will speak with or acknowledge him; but this man receives thieves, for a dying thief went with Him into Paradise! Some men, who run well for a season, who suddenly fall from their high estate, are banished and excluded, proscribed and shut out; and I suppose, while society is what it is, this must always be the case—no, in Christ's Church discipline requires that the offender should be put forth from us; it is painful, but it must be done; but there is no "must" of this sort pressing with dire necessity upon the tender heart of the Savior; He can receive without pollution; yes, even receive into His heart without injury to His purity.

"This man receives sinners." Contrary to the maxims, and customs, and ways of the world, Jesus keeps open house for outcasts; when all other doors are shut, this man's door is open. When everyone else has bid you go your way as an unclean thing, not fit to be looked upon, this man still stands crying, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Blessed fact! May you prove its truthfulness, dear friends, by going to Jesus yourself, even though you are in the worst sense a sinner. "This man receives sinners"—not, however, that they may remain sinners, but to pardon their sins, to justify their persons, to cleanse their hearts by the Holy Spirit—to preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to lead them on from strength to strength, to enable them to serve Him, and to show forth His praise, to have communion with Him, and to enjoy His love—"This man receives sinners" at last, to reign with Him in glory, everlasting, when the world and sin shall have passed away. Thus much we have noticed with regard to the fact. O blessed Spirit, give poor troubled consciences power to rest in this sweet truth of God.

I want your attention to another thought, namely, *the consistency of this fact*. It is a most consistent and proper thing that this man should receive sinners. If the Pharisees had not been rendered useless by their prejudice, and would have considered the matter a little while, they might have thought so, too. Consider *His person*—who was this man? He claimed to be, and even they, themselves, must have acknowledged Him to have been by descent, the Son of David. It was most natural that the Son of David should receive sinners. It is what David did—you expect to see the Son of David doing what His father did before Him. Do you not remember when David fled to the hold, in the cave of Adullam, that it is written, “Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain unto them”? The very first band of men that ever served under David were most disreputable characters in the eye of Saul and his government. They had escaped from their country, partly impoverished through the tyrannical conduct of Saul, and probably being knee-deep in treason against him, they escaped to put themselves under the leadership of that captain of bandits called David. It seemed but natural that the Son of David should receive just such a company when He began to establish His *spiritual* monarchy. The New Jerusalem is founded upon Christ Jesus who is pure and perfect, but its first stones are hewn out of the quarries of sin. Our Lord Jesus, like Solomon, builds the temple of the Church, but the materials come from among those Tyrian sinners who are strangers and aliens by birth. The Savior takes, as His father, David, did before Him, discontented bankrupts, and distressed traitors that they may make up His band. If they had thought of that circumstance, they might have seen that it was not quite so strange that the Son of David received sinners.

If you and I reflect a while, we shall remember that *the types* which were set forth concerning Christ all seem to teach us that He must receive sinners. One of the earliest types of the Savior was Noah's ark, by which a certain company, not only of men, but also of the lowest animals, were preserved from perishing by water, and were floated out of the old world into the new. See, going up the hill on which the ark is built, not only the fleet gazelle, the timid sheep, the patient ox, the noble horse, the generous dog, and the fair creatures that you would wish to spare—but here comes the lion, his jaws all stained with blood; here is the fierce tiger, and the wild hyena, the filthy swine and the stupid ass—creatures of all kinds come here and find shelter! Who complains? I hear no voice lifting up its veto and crying, "There is no room for the swine here; there is no room for the fierce tiger here." The ark was ordained on purpose to save some of every kind; and just so, our Savior Jesus receives all sorts of people into Himself, and it is no marvel if this man receives sinners! Fly here, you loving and tender doves! Come here, you sweet birds of purest song! But ho, you ravens, eagles, vultures, and birds of evil name, you hurry here, also, for the ark receives all who come! A very prominent type under the Levitical dispensation was the City of Refuge. If a man had slain another, he fled from the pursuer of blood with hot haste and swift foot, and ran at once into the City of Refuge, and the gates were shut and he was preserved. Now, brethren, you would not have thought it a strange thing if you had seen a man-slayer fleeing to the city—you would have thought it far more singular if any came there but man-slayers! "Why," you say, "this city has been set up and ordained on purpose that men who have been men-slayers might find refuge within its walls, and therefore, it is natural to find the red-handed man come fleeing here." Beloved, Jesus Christ is the City of Refuge! Who should flee to Him but the sinner needing refuge? And who should

need shelter but those requiring sanctuary from the avenger of blood? When you see the guilty hastening to Jesus, you say, “It is in keeping with the type, and it is no marvel whatever that He receives them.”

The scapegoat, again, was a very manifest type of the Messiah. They laid the sins of the people upon the scapegoat's head, and then it took all their iniquities away into the wilderness. Now, suppose some objecting critic had said, “This goat which is set apart in the worship of God actually bears sins upon its head, and here are sinful people coming to put their sins there.” Who else should come? What was the meaning of the scapegoat, if there were no sin among the people of Israel? Come here today, not you righteous—for you need no scapegoat—but you sinful ones! Here is the sin-bearer in type before you, set apart to bear the iniquity of the people. He is about to be driven into the wilderness to take sin away; come here and put your sins upon him, for unless you come, the ceremony will have no meaning whatever! Look through any of the types, and with very few exceptions, the thought of sin is prominent, and the doctrine that Christ is to come into the world to save sinners is clearly written upon the front of the whole set of types of the Old Testament.

Let us remark again that *the metaphors* which Christ has used to set Himself forth, many, if not all of them, imply that He receives sinners. What is written concerning Him? “There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” In our hymns, over and over and over again we delight to sing—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,”

and yet again,

“The fountain of Christ,  
Lord help us to sing.”

Now, what is the fountain for but for the cleansing of the filthy? Cleanse the already clean? Absurd! Why do they need it? If they are already pure, why do they need to wash? But the fact that there is provision made for great washing implies great filthiness, and that the fountain is furnished with a purifying element of wondrous power, namely, precious blood, seems to indicate that it was meant for great sin, unheard-of sin—sin which to the uttermost has polluted and defiled the frame of manhood. The Savior also describes Himself as a *feast* in many of His parables. A great king makes a supper, and oxen and fatlings are killed. Now, for whom is a feast prepared but for the hungry? In the parables, the feast is set not merely for hungry persons, but the blind, the halt, and the lame are called and compelled to enter. The Savior would not have delighted to set Himself forth as waters except for the sake of thirsty ones, or as meat, had there been no famishing souls. “Ho, everyone who thirsts,” He says, “come to the waters. And he who has no money, let him come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Why all this to persons who have no needs? *Sinners* are those who have these needs, these hunger and thirst; and they are bid to come to Christ as the gospel feast.

Moreover, the Master has been pleased to take to Himself one or two *titles* which imply that He came to receive sinners. He takes the title of physician, but as He told these very Pharisees a little while before, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick.” There is no practice for the physician in a neighborhood where every man is well; there must be sickness to involve the necessity for a physician. Why his art? Why his skill in pharmacy if men are safe and sound without it? And why Christ the Savior—the pardoner—if none



to save or forgive? There is no excess in excellence in the Bible, nothing superfluous—why Christ a physician, unless for the sick? He styles Himself very frequently the Redeemer, and saints in the olden times delighted to speak of Him as their Redeemer. But a Redeemer for whom? Who needs redeeming but a slave? Who needs to be purchased into liberty but the man who is in hopeless bondage, and cannot free himself from the chains? A redeemer for men already free—how can it be? He sets free not free men, but captives! He looses real and irksome fetters! He snaps not fictitious chains which fancy binds about fretful, frivolous persons—He breaks iron chains, and snatches real yokes from off the necks of the thoroughly bound. There can be no Redeemer in the fullness of the title unless the persons are enslaved, and His office must relate to such. I think I may distinctly say that if all the titles of the Savior do not involve or suppose the existence of sins, most do, and that either directly, or indirectly, they would furnish an argument to me to show that this man came into the world to receive sinners.

If more evidence were needed, I would point you to the Savior's *miracles*. The miracles which the Savior performed were very few of them miracles of judgment; they were almost all miracles of mercy. They were performed upon the sick, symbolical of His spiritual miracles upon the morally sick. They were performed upon persons possessed of devils, as if to show at once that even the devilish element which enters into man's rebellion is not too strong for the Savior to conquer, or too foul for Him to touch. His miracles were sometimes worked on the dead, and those, as you will remember, in different stages of corruption. The young child in Jairus' chamber was yet sweet of flesh as though she had just fallen asleep—He quickened her. The young man at the gates of Nain was taken out to be buried—already there were tokens which made the mother say,

“Let us bury our dead out of our sight.” But the Almighty voice quickened him. As for Lazarus, he had been dead four days already, and his sister said, “By this time he stinks.” And as if to betoken that Jesus Christ can deliver not only from incipient sin, but from sin in its foulest stage of corruption and putridity, He spoke to Lazarus and said, “Lazarus, come forth.” These miracles must have had some meaning and some teaching. If He thus touched men and healed their natural infirmities, how can you think He will not, whose mission is mainly spiritual, heal spiritual infirmities? He might have said, and said truly, “Though I heal you, that is not the grand design of My mission—My kingdom is not of this world, nor are My healings intended to be of this world, either, in their grandest development—I descended from heaven to heal sick souls, to raise the spiritually dead, and conquer disease in the realm of spirit, rather than in the physical world.” This day every miracle of the Savior seems to cry to me, to you, “Diseased souls, look to Jesus Christ, and be saved!”

Did you ever observe how many of His *parables*, also, are to the same effect—how, time after time, as in the three memorable parables of the chapter before us, it is the sinner who He is teaching, and it is God’s love in forgiving sin that He is endeavoring to set forth before the eyes which self-righteousness has made, alas, so dim and blind? He is constantly telling us of a vainglorious Pharisee whose prayer is a mass of reeking pride, and of a penitent publican whose humble cry brings justification from on high. He speaks of two debtors, who had nothing to pay, frankly forgiven; and of the one who loved most, because he had most forgiven. He talks of a barren fig tree, spared to be dug about and fertilized; of a wounded man, pitied and succored by a good Samaritan; of loiterers admitted to the vineyard at the 11th hour; and of poor, and halt, and lame, entertained at a banquet of love.

I need not continue longer in this strain, for I think the consistency of the fact is evident to you all. I can well picture before me Jesus Christ receiving sinners, but I cannot imagine Him, I cannot, with the utmost stretch of the imagination, picture Him as rejecting sinners. I cannot read of the rest of His life, and then think of Him as saying, “Stand back you unclean.” I cannot suppose Him with a crowd before Him, crying, “Far from Me, you ungodly! Keep a distance from this pure and sacred Being who condescends to look upon you!” And I cannot—I will not try, either—I cannot fancy it possible that He will reject you, my dear friend, if you go this morning into His presence, and humbly seek His face. It would be altogether a departure from His constant mode of action, and there can be no such departure, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever! Thus, I think, we have shown the consistency of the fact with the Person and work of Christ.

Observe, *the condescension* of this fact. This man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—*this* man receives sinners. This man, who is none other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces—*this* man receives sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe this mighty stoop of love. That any of us should be willing to seek after the lost seed of the house of Adam is nothing wonderful, they are of our own race; but that He, the offended God, against whom the transgression had been committed—that He should take upon Himself the form of a servant and bear the sins of many, and should then, as man, be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, and blot out their transgressions and iniquities—this is marvelous! It is only rendered believable at all by the fact that God Himself declares it, and that abundant witnesses testify to it. I do think that if, for the first time, any but God had told the angels of this, they could not have conceived it as true; and I do not wonder that

sometimes sinners under a sense of sin cry out, “It is too good to be true!” It were, indeed, too good, if it were looked at from our side of the question, but viewed as coming from God, the infinite fountain of all grace and mercy, it is believable, it is joyfully certain. It is the greatest wonder in heaven, or earth, or even in hell. There is no marvel like the truth of God that, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” that He who ever lives bowed His head to die for sinners; and having made atonement for sin, now receives the very chief of sinners into His heart’s love, and makes them His companions and His friends.

Oh, will you kick against such condescension as this? Will your hearts be like iron when you think of such favor as this manifested to sinful men? Sinners, when God stoops, will you not stoop? When from the highest heaven, He seeks you, will you not seek Him? When you thus see His love so infinitely revealed, are there no drawings of heart, are there no meltings of penitence towards the bleeding Savior? Surely cold drops of horror might stand even upon marble, or ooze forth from granite at the sound of Calvary’s groans; and are there no tears in your eyes, no thoughts of melting, moving penitence, when you mark such mercy and compassion manifested towards you? Jesus condescends to receive sinners, and yet they stand out against Him! Be astonished, O heavens! Be ashamed, O earth!

We do but touch that point, and now let us notice *the certainty of this fact*. That “This man receives sinners” is undeniable. Sometimes when the sinner comes, Jesus is standing on the doorstep, and before he begins to knock, he is safe in the Savior’s arms, and finds himself forgiven before he has time to make a complete confession. At other times, men have to knock, but the very first knock opens the door. Some of us stood knocking four or five years, unbelievably knocking, but still knocking anxiously, craving mercy and not finding it.

Ah, but we did find it after all. It does not say that He will show you that He has received you in the next minute or two, that He will pour peace into your spirit the first moment He receives you—but He *will* receive you. If He tarries, wait for Him; knock, and knock, and knock again, for there never yet was a soul that could say, “I was a sinner—I went to this man, and He did not receive me.” You are growing weary, are you, young man? These three or four months that you have been watching and praying have tried your patience. Ah, dear brother, don’t you see the cross and the Savior hanging on it? If you look to Him, your time of suspense will doubtless be over at once. You have made a mistake—darkness has been over your eyes; you have been looking in the wrong places— to your feelings, your penitence, your faith, rather than to Him. Or, if it is true that He has kept you waiting, yet wait on, hope on, hope always. While the lamp holds out to burn, despair must not trample down your soul. Jesus must receive you—He did receive sinners once, and again, I bid you, remember that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! He must receive you—cast yourself on Him, and you shall find that He will receive you. There is a great multitude of people here this morning, and yet among us all, there is not one who can say, “We sought the Lord and He would not receive us,” but there are many hundreds here, who, though they had a sorry time of it in the season of conviction, yet can clap their hands and say, “Truly, truly, the Master does manifest Himself to all who cry to Him in truth.” Try Him, then, and you will find it true with you, too.

I shall want you now, dear friends, for a moment, to permit me to show *the adaptation of this fact* to many who are now present. “This man receives sinners,” is an announcement well adapted to many of this congregation. It is so very plain. If it were a sentence which needed much explanation, it might not suit the multitude. There would be some who would think it

over, and say, “Alas! Such a text hardly meets *my* case; it is a mystery; I cannot get at the bottom of it.” But this is so simple, “This man receives sinners.” You know what it is to be received into a house? You go, you knock. The door opens. You are received. This is all you have to do in the matter of salvation, too. You go as you are to Christ; you knock; you are received. It is a blessed sentence from its plainness.

It is very blessed, too, from its personality. I can see my name in it. You will say, “How?” Well, dear friends, I wish you may be able to see yours. “This man receives *sinners*.” It does not say He receives John, Hannah, Sarah, Mary, and Thomas; it says much better than that; it says, “This man receives *SINNERS*.” Now, there may be a mistake about my name being Charles; and if I found it written in God’s Word that He received a person of my name, I would always be excessively anxious about the registration; I would be afraid lest I should not really be the person described; but when it says, He “receives *sinners*,” I am very clear about this meaning me, for I know I am a sinner; the devil himself, liar as he is, dares not say I am not a sinner! No, he oftentimes does me very good service by telling me how very clearly that is my name; and I never thank him for anything but that—that he does sometimes help one to read his title clear by enabling one to see distinctly that he *is* a sinner. Well, *you* are a sinner—then the text means you—and, “This man receives sinners.” If you were in some country, say in the center of Africa, wandering about at night amidst a crowd of huts, wondering where you could find lodging for the night; if you saw a board put up very legibly printed with these words, “This person receives white men,” why you would say to yourself, “That is it.” You would not care that it did not say, “This person receives John Smith or Tom Brown.” It would be quite enough for you, “He receives white men.” You are a white man, and you would say, “He receives me.”

Now, this man receives sinners, you are a sinner—then He will receive you. Suppose we reverse it, and there were put up a notice in one of our streets, “At this house, they receive black men.” Now, I cannot conceive any black man saying, “They will not receive me because I am so very black.” “Why,” he would say, “it says they will receive me, and the blacker I am, the more certainly is this invitation meant for me. If I am a jet-black man, then I am very black, and they will, with less hesitation receive me.” I cannot suppose a half-caste man saying, “Well, I have a little white in me, therefore, I feel sure they will take me.” He might feel proud of it, but then there would come afterwards the thought, “I am not clear that this is meant for me, if I am not *all* black.” So if there are any of you who are a little selfrighteous, and say, “I do not know whether I am such a sinner as some people are,” you *may* doubt whether you are a sinner, but you who *know* you are sinners right through to the backbone, sinners everywhere and every way, there cannot be any doubt about *you*, your name is as clearly there as possible! There is plainness and there is personality.

But there is *presentness*, too. “This man *receives* sinners.” Sometimes, on the doorsteps of workhouses, you may see a very sorry sight late at night—a company of men, women, and boys crowding on the doorstep to spend the night there, because they came too late. There must be an hour when the workhouse must be shut, and the refuge for the night closed, but they arrived too late and outside they must be kept. But you never saw a soul shivering outside Christ’s door on the doorstep of eternal ruin, because it came too late in this life. There was the thief—he had a hard run for it, but he just reached the door in time. Without doubt, it is written on the top of my Master’s door, “This man *receives*—at all times and at all seasons—this man *receives* sinners.” It will be a sorrowful day for you, some of you, if you die as you now are, when this

sentence will be blotted out, and you will see written over the door of mercy, “This man *received* sinners.” Then it will be the hell of your hells that He did receive sinners once, but that you never came; that when it was said, “He *receives* sinners,” you passed by carelessly and proudly, and would not enter; and now mercy is a thing of the past, and you are shut up where hope can never come, in the flames of hell. But as long as life lasts, dear hearers, that inscription stands in all its glorious presentness, “This man receives sinners.”

Do observe *the unqualified sense* in which the sentence is put, “This man receives sinners.” But how? What sort of sinners? How are they to feel? How are they to come? Not a word is said about their coming, or their preparation, but simply, “This man receives sinners.” Some sinners came to Christ walking; others came to Christ limping on crutches, having lost a leg—He never turned any away because they came on crutches. One man came on his bed—indeed, he did not come, but was brought by other people; Jesus received him all the same for that. There were some who did not seek the Lord at all, but Christ Jesus came to them, and received them by a blessed victory of divine grace. He receives sinners, and the only stipulation that is put in at all is, “*Whoever will*, let him take the water of life freely.” If you will, take. If you have a will to Christ, if God has given you a will towards Christ Jesus—and if you have nothing beyond that will—no feelings, no emotions, no works, no experience which could qualify you for Him—if you do but will—“Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “This man receives sinners.” Sometimes if you want to get a child into an Orphan Asylum, you might just as well keep the child yourself as go through the expense and trouble of working to get the child in—there are so many difficulties to be encountered in effecting your design. If you want to get to Jesus Christ, there is no trouble, no expense. Going to Jesus



Christ is coming to an open door of mercy. The city of the New Jerusalem, you remember, had four gates, and we are told none of them are ever shut, “They are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there,” so that come as we may, “This man receives sinners just as they come to Him.”

II. Now, I wanted to speak upon the second head, but I had not sufficient forethought to store up the time, so we must only say of that just this—Jesus Christ, having once received sinners, enters into the most familiar and endearing communion with them that is possible. **HE FEASTS WITH THEM**—their joys are His joys, their work for God is His work for God. He feasts with them at their table, and they with Him at His table; and He does this wherever the table is spread. It may be in an attic, or in a cellar; in a wilderness, or on a mountain; He still eats with them. He does this now in the ordinances and means of grace by His Spirit; and this He will do in the fullness of glory when He takes these sinners up to dwell with Him. Sinners are not merely permitted the parings of mercy, but the very marrow and fatness. They are not only allowed to sit and dip their feet in the margin of the stream, but they may wade in, and find it a river to swim in—they shall not, in heaven, sit in the outer circle—they shall draw near the throne and *reign* with Jesus. There is nothing which Christ will not give to sinners. They shall be crowned; they shall have harps of gold; they shall dwell in the many mansions near to God Himself! There is no second and lower party, as it were—He does not receive sinners, and put them at the lower end of the table, below the salt. He receives sinners and eats with them; He receives them into the soul and flower of Christian life and Christian privilege among all the favored saints of the celestial courts.

I would to God I had time to plead this matter home with some who are here this morning, and who are not believers in

Jesus. Oh, sinner, trust my Master, and you shall be saved! May the Spirit of God make you trust Him now! I know your sense of unworthiness; I know you feel you are not fit to come, but *He* says nothing about fitness, so why should *you* say it? Christ lays down no conditions, so why do you make conditions? “This man receives sinners.” “Why,” says Bunyan, “I felt myself such a sinner once that I could do nothing but fly to Christ, and if He had had a drawn sword in His hand, the terrors of hell were so dreadful that I could have borne the terrors of that drawn sword to escape from the wrath of God.” But here, instead of the drawn sword is the warm loving heart. Fly to it, sinner! God help you to fly now, that you may be saved. If He should reject you, come and tell us. I would not knowingly preach a lying gospel—and if you can prove to me that He does not receive sinners, we will have a Sunday service and preach that the gospel has failed; for we will preach the truth of Him and not speak falsely for God. When you find He rejects a coming sinner, let us hear it, that our hopes may no longer be as bright and high as they are now, if we are to be deceived after all.

Try the Lord Jesus, sinner! Taste and see that the Lord is good. Come to Jesus now! Come as you are! Come now to Him! You need not stop to get to your houses to bend your knees to pray; one cry, one tear, one LOOK with the believing eye will do it. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” While we thus preach, may the Master enter into your hearts by His Spirit, and may you be led to Him, and we will praise Him together, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Luke 15.***

# 666 HOLY WORK FOR CHRISTMAS – LUKE 2:17-20

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A Sermon  
Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 24th, 1865,  
by the  
REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they who heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” — Luke 2:17-20

EVERY SEASON has its own proper fruit—apples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year, and with man there is a time for every purpose under heaven. At this season the world is engaged in congratulating itself, and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens; let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think, today, of the birth of the Savior, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Savior in our *hearts*—that as He is already “formed in us the hope of glory,” we may be “renewed in the spirit of our minds”—that we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity, and do our first works, enjoy our first loves, and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our espousals. Let us go to Jesus with something of that

youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to Him at first. Let Him be crowned anew by us, for He is still adorned with the dew of His youth, and remains “The same yesterday, today and forever.” The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently, in the olden times, were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the toils of war because there was a cathedral within their walls, and they were set aside to the bishop’s service, being called in the olden times by the name of “holy work-folk.” Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season; and considering ourselves to be “holy work-folk,” we may keep it, after a different sort from other men, in holy contemplation, and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift to us is the new-born King.

I selected this text this morning because it seemed to indicate to me four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of the verses sets before us a different way of sacred service. Some, it appears, published abroad the news, told to others what they had seen and heard. Some wondered with a holy marveling and astonishment; one, at least, according to the third verse, pondered, meditated, thought upon these things; and others, in the fourth place, glorified God and gave Him praise. I know not which of these four did God the best service, but I think if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises, we should be sure to praise God after a most godly and acceptable fashion.

I. To begin then, in the first place, we find that some celebrated the Savior’s birth by **PUBLISHING ABROAD** what they had heard and seen; and truly we may say of them that *they had something* to rehearse in men’s ears well worth the telling!

That for which prophets and kings had waited long, had at last arrived and arrived to them. They had found out the answer to the perpetual riddle. They might have run through the streets with the ancient philosopher, crying, “Eureka! Eureka!” for their discovery was far superior to his. They had found out no solution to a mechanical problem or metaphysical dilemma, but their discovery was second to none ever made by men in real value, since it has been like the leaves of the tree of life to heal the nations, and a river of water of life to make glad the city of God! They had seen angels; they had heard them sing a song all strange and new. They had seen more than angels—they had beheld the angel’s King, the Angel of the Covenant whom we delight in! They had heard the music of heaven, and when near that manger, the ear of their faith had heard the music of earth’s hope, a mystic harmony which should ring all down the ages—the sweet melody of hearts attuned to praise the Lord, and the glorious swell of the holy joy of God and man rejoicing in glad accord. They had seen God incarnate—such a sight that he who gazes on it must feel his tongue unloosed, unless indeed an unspeakable astonishment should make him dumb. Be silent when their eyes had seen such a vision? Impossible! To the first person they met outside that lowly stable door, they began to tell their matchless tale, and they wearied not till nightfall, crying, “Come and worship! Come and worship Christ, the newborn King!” As for us, beloved, have we also not something to relate which demands utterance? If we talk of Jesus, who can blame us? This, indeed, might make the tongue of him that sleeps to move—the mystery of God incarnate for our sake, bleeding and dying that we might neither bleed nor die, descending that we might ascend, and wrapped in swaddling bands that we might be unwrapped of the grave clothes of corruption. Here is such a story, so profitable to all hearers that he who repeats it the most often, does best and he

who speaks the least has most reason to accuse himself for sinful silence.

They had something to tell, and *that something had in it the inimitable blending which is the secret sign and royal march of Divine authorship; a peerless marrying of sublimity and simplicity*; angels singing— singing to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory! Bright at midnight! God! A Babe!! The Infinite! An infant of a span long!! The Ancient of Days! Born of a woman!! What more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenter's wife, a child? What more sublime than a "multitude of the heavenly host" waking the midnight with their joyous song, and God Himself in human flesh made manifest? A child is but an ordinary sight; but what a marvel to see that word which was, "In the beginning with God, tabernacling among us that we might behold His glory"—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? Brethren, we have a tale to tell, as simple as sublime. What simpler?— "Believe and live." What more sublime?—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." A system of salvation, so wonderful, that angelic minds cannot but adore as they meditate upon it; and yet, so simple that the children in the temple may fitly hymn its virtues as they sing, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." What a splendid combining of the sublime and the simple have we in the great atonement offered by the incarnate Savior! Oh make known to all men this saving truth of God!

The shepherds need no excuse for making everywhere the announcement of the Savior's birth, *for what they told they first received from heaven*. Their news was not muttered in their ears by Sybilline oracles, nor brought to light by philosophic research, not conceived in poetry nor found as treasure trove among the volumes of the ancient, but it was revealed to them by that notable gospel preacher who led the angelic host, and testified,

“Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” When heaven entrusts a man with a merciful revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. What? Keep that a secret whose utterance eternal mercy makes to charm the midnight air? To what purpose were angels sent if the message were not to be spread abroad? According to the teaching of our own beloved Lord, we must not be silent, for He bids us, “What you hear in secret, that reveal you in public; and what I tell you in the ear in closets, that proclaim you upon the housetops.” Beloved, you have heard a voice from heaven—you twice-born, begotten again unto a lively hope, you have heard the Spirit of God bearing witness of God’s truth with you, and teaching you of heavenly things. You then must keep this Christmas, by telling to your fellow men what God’s own Holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal to you.

But though the shepherds told what they *heard* from heaven, remember that *they spoke of what they had seen below*. They had, by observation, made those truths of God most surely their own which had first been spoken to them by revelation. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the Bible, he finds also in his heart. We must bring down the mystery and make it plain, by knowing, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, its practical power on the heart and conscience. My brethren, the gospel which we preach is most surely revealed to us by the Lord; but, moreover, our hearts have tried and proved, have grasped, have felt, and have realized its truth and power. If we have not been able to understand its heights and depths, yet we have felt its mystic power upon our heart and spirit. It has plainly revealed sin to us; it has revealed to us our pardon. It has killed the reigning power of sin; it has given us Christ to reign over us, and the Holy Spirit to dwell within our bodies as in a temple. Now *we must* speak. I do not urge any of you to speak of Jesus, who

merely know the word as you find it in the Bible, *your* teaching can have but little power; but I do speak earnestly to you who know its mighty influence upon the *heart*, who have not only heard of the baby, but have seen Him in the manger, taken Him up in your own arms and received Him as being born to you, a Savior to you, Christos, the Anointed for you, Jesus the Savior from sin, for *you*. Beloved, can you do otherwise than speak of the things which you have seen and heard? God has made you to taste and to handle of this good word of life, and you must not, you dare not hold your peace, but you *must* tell friends and neighbors what you have felt within.

These were shepherds, *unlettered men*. I will warrant you they could not read in a book; there is no probability that they even knew a single letter. They were shepherds, but they preached right well. And, my brothers, whatever some may think, preaching is not to be confined to those learned gentlemen, who have taken their degrees at Oxford or at Cambridge, or at any College or University. It is true that learning need not be an impediment to grace, and may be a fitting weapon in a gracious hand, but often the grace of God has glorified itself, by the plain clear way in which unlettered men have understood the gospel and have proclaimed it. I would not mind asking the whole world to find a Master of Arts now living who has brought more souls to Christ Jesus than Richard Weaver. If the whole bench of bishops have done a tenth as much in the way of soul-winning as that one man, it is more than most of us give them credit for. Let us give to our God all the glory, but still let us not deny the fact that this sinner saved, with the brogue of the coal miner still about him, fresh from the coal pit, tells the story of the cross, by God's grace, in such a way, that Right Reverend Fathers in God, might humbly sit at his feet to learn the way to reach the heart and melt the stubborn soul! It is true an uneducated brother is not fitted for all work—he has his



own sphere—but he is quite able to tell of what he has seen and heard, and so it strikes me, is every man in a measure. If you have seen Jesus and heard His saving voice, if you have received truth as from the Lord, felt its tremendous power as coming from God to you, and if you have experienced its might upon your own spirit—why you can surely tell out what God has written within. If you cannot get beyond that into the deeper mysteries, into the more knotty points, well, well, there are some who can, and so you need not be uneasy; but you can at least reveal the first and foundational truths, and they are by far the most important. If you cannot speak in the pulpit, if as yet your cheek would mantle with a blush, and your tongue would refuse to do her office in the presence of many, there are your children—you are not ashamed to speak before them, are you? There is the little cluster round the hearth on Christmas night, there is the little congregation in the workshop, and there is a little audience somewhere, to whom you might tell out of Jesus' love to lost ones. Do not get beyond what you know; do not plunge into what you have not experienced, for if you do, you will be out of your depth—and then, very soon, you will be floundering and making confusion worse confounded. Go as far as you know; and since you know yourself to be a sinner—and Jesus a Savior, and a great one, too—talk about those two matters, and good will come of it. Beloved, each one, in his own position, tell what you have heard and seen; publish that abroad among the sons of men.

*But were the shepherds authorized?* It is a great thing to be authorized! Unauthorized ministers are most shameful intruders! Unordained men, who are not in the apostolic succession, entering the pulpit—very horrible—very horrible indeed! The Puseyite mind utterly fails to fathom the depth of horror, which is contained in the idea of an unauthorized man preaching, and a man out of the apostolic succession, *daring* to

teach the way of salvation! To me this horror seems very much like a schoolboy's fright at a hobgoblin which his fears had conjured up. I think if I saw a man slip through the ice into a cold grave, and I could rescue him from drowning, it would not be so very horrible to me to be the means of saving him, though I may not be employed by the Royal Humane Society. I imagine if I saw a fire, and heard a poor woman scream at an upper window, and likely to be burned alive, if I should wheel the fire escape up to the window, and preserve her life, it would not be so very dreadful a matter, though I might not belong to the regular Fire Brigade. If a company of brave volunteers should chase an enemy out of their own county, I do not know that it would be anything so shocking, although a whole army of mercenaries might be neglecting their work in obedience to some venerable military order which rendered them incapable of effective service. But mark you, the shepherds and others like them are in the apostolic succession, and they are authorized by divine ordinance—for every man who hears the gospel is authorized to tell it to others! Do you need authority? Here it is in strong confirmation from Holy Writ—“Let him who hears say, Come”—that is, let every man who truly hears the gospel bid others come to drink of the water of life. This is all the warrant you require for preaching the gospel according to your ability. It is not every man who has ability to preach the Word; and it is not every man that we should like to *hear* preach it in the great congregation, for if all were mouth, what a great vacuum the Church would be; yet every Christian, in some method, should deliver the glad tidings. Our wise God takes care that liberty of prophesying shall not run to riot, for He does not give efficient pastoral and ministerial gifts to very many; yet every man, according to his gifts, let him minister. Every one of you, though not in the pulpit, yet in the pew, in the workshop, somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, do make

known the savor of the Lord Jesus. And let this be your authority—"Let him that hears, say, Come." I never thought of asking any authority for crying, "Fire!" when I saw a house burning. I never dreamed of seeking any authority for doing my best to rescue a poor perishing fellow man, nor do I mean to seek it now! All the authority you need, any of you, is not the authority which can stream from prelates decorated with long sleeves, but the authority which comes directly from the great Head of the Church, who gives authority to every one of those who hear the gospel, to teach every man, his fellow, saying, "Know the Lord."

Here, dear brethren, is one way for you to keep a right holy, and in some sense, a right merry Christmas! Imitate these humble men, of whom it is said, "When they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."

**II.** We set before you, now, another mode of keeping Christmas by **HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION AND ADORATION**. "And all they who heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds." We shall have little to say of those persons who merely wondered, and did nothing more. Many are set a wondering by the gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear it—though not, to them, in itself something new—yet there are new ways of putting it, and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preacher's voice is to them as the sound of one that gives a goodly tune upon an instrument. They are glad to listen; they are not skeptics; they do not quibble; they raise no difficulties, they just say to themselves, "It is an excellent gospel; it is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension." Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told them by shepherds; they cannot imagine how unlearned and ignorant men should speak of

these things; and they marvel how such things should ever get into these shepherds' heads, where they learned them, how it is that they seem so earnest about them, what kind of operation they must have passed through to be able to speak as they do. But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides, and they go their way and think no more about it. There are many of you who are set to wondering whenever you see a work of God in your district. You hear of somebody converted who was a very extraordinary sinner, and you say, "It is very wonderful!" There is a revival; you happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriously— you say, "Well, this is a singular thing! Very astonishing!" Even the newspapers can afford a corner, at times, for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit; but then all emotion ends— it is all wondering, and nothing more. Now, I trust it will not be so with any of us—that we shall not think of the Savior and of the doctrines of the gospel, which He came to preach simply with amazement and astonishment, for this will work us but little good. On the other hand, there is another mode of wondering which is akin to adoration, if it is not adoration, itself. I think it would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real worship, for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores. I am inclined to think that the astonishment which sometimes seizes upon the human intellect at the remembrance of God's greatness and goodness is, perhaps, the purest form of adoration which ever rises from mortal men to the throne of the Most High. This kind of wonder I recommend to those of you who, from the quietness and solitariness of your lives, are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds in telling out the tale to others—you can at least fill

up the circle of the worshippers before the throne by wondering at what God has done!

Let me suggest to you that holy wonder at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should consider His fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the broom of destruction, should devise a wonderful scheme for his redemption, and that He should, Himself, undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvelous! Probably it is most marvelous to you in its relation to yourself, that *you* should be redeemed by blood; that God should forsake the thrones and royalties above to suffer shamefully below for you. If you know yourself, you can never see any adequate motive or reason in your own flesh for such a deed as this. "Why such love to me?" you will say. What should you and I say, if David, sitting in his house, could only say, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me up to now?" Had we been the most meritorious of individuals, and had unceasingly kept the Lord's commands, we could not have deserved such a priceless gift as Incarnation! But, sinners, offenders who revolted and went from God further and further, what shall we say of this incarnate God dying for us, but, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us." Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder, dear friends, is in this way a very practical emotion. Holy wonder will lead you to grateful worship; being astonished at what God has done, you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden throne with the song, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him who sits on the throne, and does these great things for me." Filled with this wonder, it will cause you a godly watchfulness; you will be afraid to sin against such love as this! Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will take off your shoes,

because the place where you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope. If Jesus has given Himself to you, if He has done this marvelous thing on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation, and that the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand, are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink. Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross?

What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Savior? The nine wonders of the world? Why, you may put them all into a nutshell—machinery and modern art can excel them all; but this one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of heaven and earth, and even hell itself! It is not the wonder of the olden time, but the wonder of ALL time and the wonder of *eternity*. They who see human wonders a few times, finally cease to be astonished; the noblest pile that architect ever raised finally fails to impress the onlooker—but not so this marvelous temple of incarnate Deity! The more we look, the more we are astonished, the more we become accustomed to it, the more we have a sense of its surpassing splendor of love and grace! There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the manger and the cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death. Let us, then, spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy wonder— such as will produce gratitude, worship, love, and confidence.

**III.** A third manner of holy work, namely, **HER SACRED HEART PONDERING AND PRESERVING**, you will find in the next verse.

One at least, and let us hope there were others, or at any rate, let us ourselves be the others—one kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She wondered—she did more—she pondered. You will observe there was an exercise

on the part of this blessed woman, of the three great parts of her being; her memory—she kept all these things; her affections—she kept them in her heart; her intellect— she pondered them, considered them, weighed them, turned them over; so that memory, affection, and understanding, were all exercised about these things. We delight to see this in Mary, but we are not at all surprised when we recollect that she was, in some sense, the most concerned of all on earth—for it was of her that Jesus Christ had been born. Those who come nearest to Jesus, and enter the most closely into fellowship with Him, will be sure to be the most engrossed with Him. Certain persons are best esteemed at a distance, but not the Savior; when you shall have known Him to the very fullest, then shall you love Him with the love which passes knowledge; you shall comprehend the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love. And when you shall do so, then your own love shall swell beyond all length and breadth, all height and depth. The birth most concerned Mary, and therefore, she was the most impressed with it. Note the way in which her concern was shown; she was a woman, and the divine grace which shines best in the female is not boldness—that belongs to the masculine mind; but affectionate modesty is a feminine beauty, and therefore, we do not read so much of her telling abroad as pondering within. No doubt she had her circle and her word to speak in it; but for the most part she, like another Mary, sat still in the house. She worked, but her work was most directly for *Him*, her heart's joy and delight.

Like other children, the holy child needed care, which only a mother's hand and heart could exercise. She was, therefore, engrossed with Him. O blessed engrossment! Sweet engagement! Count not that to be unacceptable service which occupies itself rather with *Jesus* than with His disciples or His wandering sheep. That woman, who broke the alabaster box

and poured the ointment upon our Jesus Himself, was faulted by Judas, and even the rest of the disciples thought that the poor had lost a benefit, but, “She has worked a good work on Me,” was the Savior’s answer. I desire to bring you to this thought, if during this season you retiring quiet ones cannot speak to others, or have no desirable opportunity or suitable gift for that work, you may sit still with Jesus, and honor Him in peace. Mary took the Lord in her arms; oh that you may bear Him in yours! She executed works directly for His person; imitate her! You can love Him, bless Him, praise Him, study Him, ponder Him, comprehend His character, study the types that set Him forth, and imitate His life; and in this way, though your worship will not blaze forth among the sons of men, and scarcely benefit them as some other forms of work, yet it will both benefit you and be acceptable to your Lord. Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich remembrances of His past loving kindnesses; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread on which saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either heard, or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold Him fast forevermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affections come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully! Wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head; but do love Him, love the blessed Son of God, your ever tender friend. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Turn over and over by meditation what you read. Do not be lettermen—do not stop at the surface; dive into the depths! Be not as the swallow, which touches the brook with her wing, but as the fish, which penetrates the lowest wave. Drink deep draughts of love; do not sip and go away, but dwell at the well



as Isaac did at the well Lahai-roi. Abide with your Lord—let Him not be to you as a wayfaring man who tarries for a night, but constrain Him, saying, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” Hold Him, and do not let Him go! The word, “ponder,” as you know, means to weigh. Make ready the scales of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? “He takes up the isles as a very little thing”—who shall take *Him* up? “He weighs the mountains in scales.” In what scales shall we weigh *Him*? Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend; and if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the arms of its understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of your affection. Oh, beloved, here is blessed Christmas work for you, if, like Mary, you lay up all these things in your heart and ponder upon them!

IV. The last piece of holy Christmas work is to come. “The shepherds returned,” we read in the 20th verse, “**GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD** for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” Returned to what? *Returned to business* to look after the lambs and sheep again; then if we desire to glorify God we need not give up our business.

Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God, is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas, how many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. The shepherds went back to the sheep pens, glorifying and praising God. Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is divine grace, which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Savior's love; yes, glorified far more than in many a cathedral, where official *religiousness* performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by yonder carter as he drives his

horse, and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow laborer by the roadside, as much as by yonder divine who, throughout the country like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our abiding in our vocation. Take care you do not fall out of the path of duty, by leaving your calling, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it; think not much of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. There is no trade which is not sanctified by the gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labor have been in some way or other, connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious; keep to your calling, brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made you, when He calls you, abide in that, unless you are quite sure—mind that—*unless you are quite sure* that He calls you to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went to their trade.

They glorified God *though they were shepherds*. As we remarked, they were not men of learning. So far from having an extensive library full of books, it is probable they could not read a word; yet they glorified God. This takes away all excuse for you good people who say, “I am no scholar; I never had any education, I never went even to a Sunday school.” Ah, but if your heart is right, you can glorify God. Never mind, Sarah; do not be cast down because you know so little; learn more if you can, but make good use of what you do know. Never mind, John; it is indeed a pity that you should have had to toil so early, as not to have acquired even the rudiments of knowledge—but do not think that you cannot glorify God. If you would praise God, live a holy life; you can do that by His grace, at any rate, without scholarship. If you would do good to others, be good yourself; and that is a way which is as open to the most illiterate, as it is to the best taught. Be of good courage! Shepherds glorified God, and so may you. Remember, there is one thing

in which they had a preference over the wise men. The wise men needed a *star* to lead them; the shepherds did not. The wise men went wrong even with a star—they stumbled into Jerusalem; the shepherds went straight away to Bethlehem. Simple minds sometimes find a glorified Christ where learned heads, much puzzled with their lore, miss Him. A good doctor used to say, “Lo, these simpletons have entered into the kingdom, while we learned men have been fumbling for the latch.” It is often so; and so, you simple minds, be comforted and glad.

The way in which these shepherds honored God is worth noticing. They did it by praising Him. Let us think more of sacred song than we sometimes do. When the song is bursting in full chorus from the thousands in this house, it is but a noise in the ear of some men; but inasmuch as many true hearts, touched with the love of Jesus, are keeping pace with their tongues, it is not a mere noise in God’s esteem, there is a sweet music in it that makes glad His ear. What is the great ultimatum of all Christian effort? When I stood here the other morning preaching the gospel, my mind was fully exercised with the winning of souls, but I seemed while preaching to get beyond that. I thought, “Well, that is not the chief end after all—the chief end is to glorify God, and even the saving of sinners is sought by the rightminded as the means to that end.” Then it struck me all of a sudden, “If in psalm singing and hymn singing we do really glorify God, we are doing more than in the preaching; because we are not then in the means, we are close upon the great end itself.” If we praise God with heart and tongue, we glorify Him in the surest possible manner, we are really glorifying Him then. “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me,” says the Lord. Sing, then, my brothers and sisters! Sing not only when you are together, but sing alone! Cheer your labor with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Make glad the family

with sacred music! We sing too little, I am sure, yet the revival of religion has always been attended with the revival of Christian *psalmody*. Luther's translations of the Psalms were of as much service as Luther's discussions and controversies; and the hymns of Charles Wesley, and Cennick, and Toplady, and Newton, and Cowper, aided as much in the quickening of spiritual life in England, as the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. We need more singing. Sing more and murmur less, sing more and slander less, sing more and quibble less, sing more and mourn less. God grant us today, as these shepherds did, to glorify God by praising Him!

I have not quite done with them. What was the subject of their praise? It appears that *they praised God for what they had heard*. If we think of it, there is good reason for blessing God every time we hear a gospel sermon. What would souls in hell give, if they could hear the gospel once more, and be on terms in which salvation grace might come to them? What would dying men give, whose tune is all but over, if they could once more come to the House of God, and have another warning, and another invitation? My brethren, what would you give sometimes, when you are shut up by sickness and cannot meet with the great congregation—when your heart and your flesh cry out for the living God? Well, praise God for what you have heard. You have heard the faults of the preacher; let him mourn them. You have heard his Master's message; do you bless God for that? Scarcely will you ever hear a sermon which may not make you sing if you are in a right frame of mind. George Herbert says, "Praying is the end of preaching." So it is, but praising is its end, too. Praise God that you hear there is a Savior! Praise God that you hear that the plan of salvation is very simple! Praise God that you have a Savior for your own soul! Praise God that you are pardoned, that you are saved! Praise Him for what you have heard, but observe, *they also praised God for what they had seen*. Look

at the 20th verse—"heard and seen." There is the sweetest music—what we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own—the things that we have made touching the King. Mere hearing may make some music, but the soul of song must come from seeing with the eye of faith. And, dear friends, you who have seen with that God-given eyesight—I pray you, let not your tongues be steeped in sinful silence! Speak loudly to the praise of sovereign grace, wake up your heart and awake psaltery and harp! One point for which they praised God was *the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen*. Observe the last sentence, "As it was told unto them." Have you not found the gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you grace—have you not had it? He promised you rest—have you not received it? He said that you should have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in Him—have you not had all these? Are not His ways, ways of pleasantness, and His paths, paths of peace? Surely you can say with the Queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me." I have found Christ sweeter than His servants could set Him forth as being. I looked upon the likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere daub as compared with Himself—the King in His beauty. I have heard of the goodly land, but oh, it flows with milk and honey more richly and sweetly, than men were ever able to tell me in their best trim for speech. Surely, what we have seen keeps pace with what we have heard. Let us then glorify and praise God for what He has done.

This word to those who are not yet converted and I have done. I do not think you can begin at the 17th verse, but I wish you would begin at the eighteenth. You cannot begin at the seventeenth—you cannot tell to others what you have not felt. Do not try it. Neither teach in the Sunday school, nor attempt to preach if you are not converted. Unto the wicked God says,

“What have you to do to declare My statutes?” But I would to God you would begin with the 18th verse—wondering! Wondering that you are spared—wondering that you are out of hell—wondering that still does His good Spirit strive with the chief of sinners. Wonder that this morning the gospel should have a word for you, after all your rejections of it, and sins against God. I should like you to begin there, because then I would have good hope that you would go on to the next verse and change the first letter, and so go from wondering to pondering. Oh sinner, I wish you would ponder the doctrines of the cross. Think of your sin, God’s wrath, judgment, hell, your Savior’s blood, God’s love, forgiveness, acceptance, heaven—think on these things. Go from wondering to pondering. And then, I would to God, you could go on to the next verse, from pondering to glorifying. Take Christ, look to Him, and trust Him! Then sing, “I am forgiven,” and go your way a believing sinner, and therefore a saved sinner, washed in the blood, and clean! Then go back, after that, to the 17th verse, and begin to tell others.

But as for you Christians who are saved, I want you to begin this very afternoon at the seventeenth—

“Then will I tell to sinners round  
What a dear Savior I have found—  
I’ll point to Your redeeming blood,  
And say—‘Behold, the way to God!’”

Then when the day is over, get up to your chambers and wonder, admire and adore; spend half an hour also like Mary in pondering and treasuring up the day’s work and the day’s hearing in your hearts; and then close all with that which never must close—go on tonight, tomorrow, and all the days of your life, glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have

seen and heard! May the Master bless you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Luke 2:1-20.***

## **667 LAST THINGS – PROV. 5:11**

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**A Sermon**  
**Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 31st, 1865,**  
**by the**  
**REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
**At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“At the last.” — Proverbs 5:11**

THE WISE MAN saw the young and simple straying into the house of the strange woman. The house seemed so completely different from what he knew it to be, that he desired to shed a light upon it, that the young man might not sin in the dark, but might understand the nature of his deeds. The wise man looked abroad, and he saw but one lamp suitable to his purpose; it was named, “At the last,” so, snatching this, he held it up in the midst of the strange woman’s den of infamy, and everything was changed from what it had been before—the truth had come to light, and the deceptive had vanished. The young man dreamed of pleasure, in wanton dalliance he hoped to find delight; but when the lamp of, “At the last,” began to shine, he saw rottenness in his bones, filthiness in his flesh, pains and griefs and sorrows, as the necessary consequence of sin, and, wisely guided, wisely taught, the simple-minded started back and listened to the admonitions of the teacher, “Come not near the door of her house, for her gates lead down to the chambers of death.”

Now, if this lamp of, “At the last,” was found so useful in this one particular case, I think it must be equally useful everywhere else, and it may help us all to understand the truth



of matters, if we will look at them in the light which this wonderful lamp yields. I can only compare my text in its matchless power to Ithuriel's spear with which, according to Milton, he touched the toad and straightway Satan appeared in his true colors. If I can apply my text to certain things today, they will come out in their true light; "At the last," shall be the rod in my hand with which I shall touch tinsel, and it shall disappear, and you will see it is not gold, and I will touch varnish and paint and graining, and you shall understand that they are really what they are, and not what they profess to be—the light of, "At the last," shall be the light of truth, the light of wisdom to our souls. It seems to me a fitting occasion for holding up this light this morning, when we have come to the end of the year and shall, in a few short hours, be at the beginning of another. This period, like Janus, has two faces, looking back on the year that is past and looking forward on the year that is to come, and my four-sided lamp will perhaps gleam afar. I wish that you may have courage enough to look down the vista of the years that you have already lived, and think of everything that you have thought, and spoken, and done. And then I hope you will have holy daring enough to let the same light shine forward on the years yet to come, when your hair will be gray, and the teeth shall fail, and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened. We will, then, examine the past and the future of life in the light of, "At the last." May it teach us wisdom and make us walk in the fear of God.

I have said that my lamp has four sides to it, and so it has—we will look at it first in the light which streams from death.

**I. DEATH** is at the last. In some sense, it is *the* last, of this mortal life; it is the last of our period of trial here below; it is the last of the days of divine grace; it is the last of the days of mortal sin. The tree falls when we die, and it sprouts not again; the house is washed from the foundations, and it is built no

more if it has been founded on sin. Death is the end of this present life. And how certain is it to all of us! This year, we have had many tokens of its certainty. One might almost compose an almanac for the year 1865, and put down the name of someone of note at least to every month, and I should scarcely exaggerate if I said to every week, in the year. All ranks and classes have been made to feel the arrow of the insatiable archer. From royalty down to poverty, the grave has been glutted with its prey. Not late in the year, there fell one whose benevolence mingled with wisdom had blessed our land and who, being dead, is still remembered by the needy, because he cheapened their bread, and broke down the laws which, while they might have fattened the rich, certainly would have impoverished the poor. His wisdom could not spare him, and though he is embalmed in the hearts of thousands, yet to the dust he has returned. Swiftly after him there fell one who ruled a mighty people in the flush of victory, when what threatened to be a disruption and a separation had ended in triumph to one side, and the nation seemed as if it were about to start on a fresh course of prosperity. By the assassin's hand he fell. Whatever question there might have been about him in his life, all men conspired to honor him in his death. The ruler of a nation, who could subdue a gallant and a mighty foe, could not subdue that old foeman who conquers whom he wills. Abraham Lincoln died as well as Cobden. And there was he who had saved many precious lives by warning mariners of the approaching storm, and thus many a ship had remained in harbor and been delivered from the merciless jaws of the deep, but he could not forecast or escape himself the last dread storm; he, too, must go down into that fathomless deep which swallows all mankind. Then, when the year was ripe and the flowers were all in bloom—fit season for his going—there was taken away the man who has garnished our nation with objects of beauty and

of joy, a man who loved the flowers and sleeps beneath them now. Like flowers, he withered as all of us must do—Sir Joseph Paxton died. Then in the month of September, when the year began to wane, three men at least who had walked with their staff to heaven and read the spheres, astronomers who predicted eclipses and told of comets, men of fame and name—three fell at once. They might tell the eclipse, but they, themselves, must be eclipsed; and they might foretell the track of the comet, but they, themselves, are gone from us just as those meteoric stars are gone. Then you will remember well, when the year had waned, grown old, it is but a day or two ago, that all were startled by the death of that young old man who had ruled our nation so long and, on the whole, so well. We shall not forget that he was taken away from us, who was in some respects, a king throughout our land. Wisdom, cheerfulness, youthful strength such as he possessed could not avert the time of death. And then, as if the muster roll were not complete, as if death could not be satisfied till the year had yielded up yet another grave, we heard that the oldest of monarchs had been taken away; and though his goodness and his wisdom had guided well the little nation over which he ruled, and given him an influence far more extensive than his own sphere, yet death spared him not, and Leopold must die. It has been a year of dying rather than of living, and you may look upon yourselves and wonder that you are here. Some, greener than we are, have been cut down. You who are ripe, are you ready? It is marvelous that, although so ripe, you should have been spared so long.

Now, in the light of all these deaths, I want you to look upon mortal sins. They sculpture angels upon gravestones sometimes; then, let each angel from the gravestone speak to us this morning, and we will listen to his words, for wise and

solemn they will surely be, and worthy of our notice, as if he had risen from the dead.

Let me take you upstairs to your own dying chamber, for there, perhaps, the lamp will burn best for you. Look at actions which you have thought to be great, and upon which you have prided yourself— how will they look at the last? You made money; you made money fast; you did the thing very cleverly; you praised yourself for it, just as others have praised themselves for conquering nations, or forcing their way to fame, or lifting themselves into eminence. Now, you are dying, and what do you think of all that? Is it as great as it seemed to be? Oh, how you leaped up to it, how you strained yourself to reach it, and you have got it, and you are dying. What do you think of it now? The greatest of human actions will appear to be insignificant when we come to die, and especially those upon which men most pride themselves— these will yield them the bitterest humiliation. We shall then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy upon such paltry things. When we shall discover that they were not real, that they were but mere bubbles, mere pretences, we shall then look upon ourselves as demented to have spent the whole of our life and of our energy upon them.

Let us look at our selfish actions in that light. A man says, “I know how to make money, and I know how to keep it, too”—and he prides himself that he is not such a fool as to be generous, nor such a simpleton as to give either to God or to the poor. Now, there he lies. Ah, do you know how to keep it now? Can you take it with you? Can you carry so much as a single farthing of it across the river of death? You are come to the water’s side—how much of it will you carry through? Ah fool! How much wiser had you been if you had laid up your treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts! You called such men fools when you were living. What do you think

of them now that you are dying? Who is the fool, he who sent his goods beforehand, or he who stored them up here to leave them everlastingly? Everything that is selfish will look beggarly when we come to die; but everything which, in the sight of God we have done for Christ's sake that has been generous, and self-denying, and noble, will, even amidst the vaults of death, sparkle with celestial splendor. Some of you have been, during this week, giving to the cause of God right generously, for which I thank you—I think I may also do it in my Master's name—and when I have thought of it, I have said to myself, “Surely, when they come to die, they shall, none of them, regret that they have served the cause of God. Ah, if they have even given to the pinching of themselves, it shall be no source of sorrow when they come to the dying bed, that they did it unto one of the least of God's little ones.” Look at your actions in the light of death, and the selfish ones shall soon pass. I would also, dear friends, that some of you would look at your self-righteousness in the light of death. You have been very good people, very upright, honest, moral, amiable, generous, and so on, and you are resting on what you are. Do you think this will bear your weight when you come to die? When you are in good health, any form of religion may satisfy, but a dying soul needs more than sand to rest on. You will need the Rock of Ages. Then, let me assure you that in the light of the grave, all confidence, except confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a clear delusion! Fly from it, I beseech you. Why will you repose beneath a Jonah's gourd that will die before the worm? Seek a better shelter—cling to the Rock of Ages; find the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The same, I may say, of all confidence in the efficacy of ceremonies and sacraments. When we are in good health, it seems a sufficiently satisfactory thing to have been baptized, and to have taken the sacrament, and to go to church, and read prayers and all that—

and one can get some little water out of those wells while one is strong and joyous. But when you come to be sick and to die, let me tell you, sacraments will be nothing to you! Baptism and the Lord's Supper will alike deceive you, if you rest on them. When you come to die, you will find them to be supports too frail to bear the weight of an immortal soul's eternal interests. It will be in vain when you lie dying, if God gives you a quickened conscience, to say, "I went to church or to meetings so many times a day." You will find it a poor bandage to your soul's wounds to be able to say, "I made a profession of godliness." Oh, your shams will all be torn away from you by the rough hand of the skeleton, death; you will need a real Savior, vital godliness, true regeneration—not baptismal regeneration! You will need *Christ*, not sacraments; and nothing short of this will do, "At the last."

And, dear friends, let me ask, as I hold up the light, how will sin appear when we come to die? It is pleasant now and we can excuse it, calling it a small thing, a little trivial mistake, a juvenile error, and imprudence, and so on; but how will sin appear when you come to die? The grim ghosts of our iniquities, if they have not been laid in the grave of Christ Jesus, will haunt our dying bed. That ghastly chamberlain, with fingers bloody and red, will draw the curtain round about us. What a horrid prospect, to be shut in with our sins forever, to be dying with no comrades about the bed to comfort, but with the remembrances of the past to terrify and to alarm!

Think, I pray you, not only upon the root and principle of evil, but upon the fruit of it. Remember that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Do not consider what the thing looks like today, but what will it be in the end? You warm the viper in your bosom, but how will you bear its sting when you shall come to lie upon your last bed? The sea, I know, is smooth and calm to you for a moment; but remember, there

are storms, there are hurricanes that sweep it; and what will your poor boat do without Christ for its Pilot when the dread storm of death shall come? I wish I could, in imagination, take you down, down, down to the waters of death, where you shall feel your feet sinking in the dread sand of uncertainty, and hear the booming of the distant sea, and your spirit shall begin to ask, “What is that ocean that I hear?” And there shall come back an answer, “You hear the breaking of the everlasting waves; the bottomless sea of eternity is that to which you are descending.” You shall feel its chill floods as they come from the ankles to the knees, and from the knees to the loins; and you will find it, (if you are without Christ), not a river to swim in, but an ocean to be drowned in forever, *forever*, FOREVER! Oh, may God help you to look at present joys, and actions, and thoughts, and doings in the light of death! What a contrast there is often between the life of man and his death! You would praise some men if you only saw their lives, but, when you see their deaths, you change your mind. There is Moses—he may be the King of Egypt, but he gives up royalty and all its tempting joys. On the mount, it is offered to him to be made the founder of a mighty race—a desire always prominent in the eastern mind, but, instead of desiring himself to be made a great nation, he, unselfishly, desires even to be blotted out of the Book of Life if God will but spare his people Israel. And what does Moses get for it all? His only earthly reward is to be the leader of a crew of slaves who are perpetually rebelling against him and vexing the Holy Spirit. Now, there is Balaam, on the other hand. He has visitations from God; and when Balak, the son of Zippor, begs him to curse Israel, he cannot, though he is quite willing to go as far as he can. He is compelled, by the inward Holy Spirit, to bless the people, but, after he has done that, for gain and for reward, he plots a plan against Israel by which they were cursed—he bids them send out the women of

Moab to lead astray the children of Israel. Now, there he goes, with his treasures of silver and gold, back to his own house, and the shrewd and busy worldly man says, “That is the man for me—do not tell me about your meek Moses, who is afraid of doing this and that, and will not look after the main chance. He has thrown away a kingdom, and now he has thrown away the chance of being the head of a nation. That is the man to make money—Balaam. He will be a common counselor, or an alderman, or lord mayor one day—that Balaam! A man must not stick too much at things; he must go ahead and make hay while the sun shines—

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”

That is the man for me who knows when to launch out on the waters and who does not ask if they are dirty or clean if they only waft him onward to wealth and success.” Ah, but they come to die, and Balaam dies—where? He had prayed, “Let my last end be like his”—like the righteous—and he died in battle, fighting against the righteous and against the God of the righteous! And hard by that very spot, Moses also died and you know how—with visions of Canaan upon his eyes melting into visions of the Canaan which is above—the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. In that death, who would not be Moses, let who will be Balaam in life? Be it yours and mine to aspire to be like Moses, both living and dying. “At the last!” Think of that, and whenever you are tempted by sin, or tempted by gain—look at it—“At the last!” “At the last!” God help you to judge righteous judgment!

**II.** And now, we will turn to the second side of our lantern. The second of these last things is **JUDGMENT**. After death the judgment. When we die, we die not. When a man dies, shall he



live again? Yes, that he shall—for his spirit never dies. God has made us such strange wondrous beings, with such wide reaching hopes, and such far darting aspirations, that it is not possible we should die and become extinct. The beast has no longing for immortality. You never hear it sigh for celestial regions—it has no dread of judgment, because there is no second life, no judgment for the beast that perishes. But the God who gives to man the dread of things to come, and makes him feel and long after something better than this small globe affords us, cannot have mocked us, cannot have made us more wretched than the beast that perishes, by giving us passions and desires never to be gratified. We are immortal, every one of us, and when the stars go out and Sol's great furnace is extinguished for lack of fuel, and, like a vesture, God's wide universe shall be rolled up, we shall still be living a life as eternal as the Eternal God Himself! Oh, when we leave this world, we are told that after death there comes a judgment to us. I do not know how it is with you—you may be more accustomed to courts of justice than I am—but there always creeps a solemnity over me, even in a common court of justice among men, and especially, when a man is being tried for his life. Laughter seems hushed there, and everything is solemn. How much more dread will be that court where men shall be tried for their eternal lives—where their souls—rather than their bodies, shall be at stake? The judgment of one's fellows is not to be despised. A bold good man can afford to laugh at the world's opinion, but still it is trying to him, for one's fellows may be right—multitudes of men, if they have really thought upon the matter, may not all be wrong. It is not easy to stand at the bar of public opinion, and receive the verdict of condemnation; but what will it be to stand at the bar of God, who is greater than all, and to receive from Him the sentence of damnation? God save us from that!

Let us think of this judgment a moment. We shall rise from the dead—we shall be there in body as well as spirit. These very bodies will stand upon the earth at the last day—when Christ shall come and the trumpet shall sound. His people shall rise at the first resurrection, and the wicked shall rise, also, and in their flesh shall they see God. Let me think of all that I have done then in the light of that. There will be present every man who has ever lived on earth. How shall I like to have all my doings published there? My very thoughts—how shall I feel when they are read aloud; what I whispered in the ear in the closet—how shall I like to have that proclaimed with the sound of a trumpet? And what I did in the dark—how shall I care to have that revealed in the light? And yet these things must be made known before the assembled universe. There will be present there my enemies. If I have treated them ill, if I have been a backbiter, a slanderer, it will be then declared—if I have been a hypocrite and a dissembler, and made others think me true when I have been false, then I shall be unmasked. Those I have injured will be there. With what alarm will the debauchee see those whom he has seduced stand with fiery eyes to accuse him there! With what horror will the oppressor see the widow and the fatherless, whom he drove to poverty, stand there as swift witnesses against him to condemnation! If I have spread false doctrine, a moral pestilence destroying human souls, my victims shall be there to gather round me in a circle and, like dogs that bay the stag—will, each of them, demand my blood! They shall all be there, friends and foes; more solemn still, “He” shall be there—the man of men, the grandest among men, because God, as well as man, and if I have despised and rejected His salvation, I shall then see Him in another fashion and after another sort—

“The Lord shall come! But not the same  
As once in lowliness He came—

A silent Lamb before His foes,  
A weary man, and full of woes.  
The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,  
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm,  
On cherub wings and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind!"

How will you face Him, you who have despised Him? You who have doubted His Deity, how will you bear the blaze of it? You rejected and trampled on His precious blood, how will you bear the weight of His almighty arm? When on the cross you would not receive Him, and when on the throne you shall not escape from Him. That silver scepter which He stretches out now to you, if you refuse to touch it, shall be laid aside, and He will take one of another metal—a rod of iron—and He shall break you in pieces! Yes, He shall dash you in pieces like potters' vessels. And God shall be there, manifestly there—that God who is here this morning, on the last day of this year, and who sees your thoughts and reads your minds at this moment, but who is so invisible that you forget that He fills this place and fills all places; you shall not be able to forget Him then. Your eyes shall see Him in that day; you shall understand His presence. You will try to hide from Him; would desire hell itself, and think it a place of shelter, if you could escape from Him; but everywhere His fire shall encircle you, shall consume you, for "Our God is a consuming fire." You shall no more be able to escape from yourself than from God. You shall find Him as present with you as your own soul will be, and you shall feel His hand of fire searching for the chords of your soul, and sweeping with a doleful *Miserere* all the heart strings of your spirit. Misery unspeakable must be yours when the voice of the God-man, shall say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell."

I would to God that you would look at all your actions in the light of the day of judgment. Our secret thoughts, let us turn them over this morning; they have been lying by till they are moldy—let us bring them forth today. My thoughts, how will you look in the light of judgment? My professions, my imaginations, my conceptions, how will they all be when the judgment day shall gleam upon them? My profession, how does that look? I have been baptized in Christ professedly. I wear a Christian name. I preach the gospel. I am a Church officer or a Church member. How will all this bear the light of that tremendous day? When I am put in the scales and weighed, shall I be the weight that I am labeled? In that dreadful day, shall I see the handwriting on the wall, “*Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*”—“You are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Or shall I hear the gracious sentence which shall pronounce me saved in Jesus Christ? As to my graces, what must they be in the light of judgment? My own salvation, all the matters of experience and knowledge—how do they all look in that light of God? I think I have believed—I think I love the Savior—I sometimes hope that I am His—but am I so? Shall I be found to be a true believer at the last? Will my love be mere hypocrisy or true affection? Will my graces be mere talk, or will they be found to be the work of God the Holy Spirit? Am I vitally united to Christ or not? Am I a mere pretender, or a true possessor of the things eternal? Oh, my soul, set these questions in the light of that tremendous day! I would to God we could now go forward to the day of judgment, in thought at any rate; and since I feel myself quite unable to lead you there, let me adopt my Savior’s words—He says that the day comes when He shall separate the righteous from the wicked, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. There shall be some on His left hand to whom He shall say, “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; sick

and in prison, and you visited Me not. Depart, you cursed.” Will He say that to you and to me? There will be some on His right hand to whom He will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” Shall He say that to you and to me? The one or the other it must be.

As I stand here this morning, I seem to feel, on my own account, and I wish you all did on yours, what a certain man in court once felt. Sentence was about to be given in his case, or, at least he thought the case would be called on immediately, and he rushed to his solicitor and he said, “Is there one thing left undone? Are you sure? For if I lose this case, I am a ruined man.” His face was white with anxiety. And so it is with you. Is there one thing left undone? For if you lose this case at God’s judgment seat you are a ruined man! Come hearer, have you believed on Christ Jesus, or is faith left undone? Have you given up self-righteousness? Have you left your sin? Have you given your heart to the Savior? Is regeneration still unaccomplished? Are you born-again? Are you in Christ? Are you saved? If your case is lost, you are a ruined man! A man ruined here may still retrieve his fortunes. The bankrupt may start again, and yet be rich. The captain who has lost a battle may renew the fight and win the next victory and begin the campaign anew. But lose the battle of life, and the fight shall be no more. Make bankruptcy in this life’s business, and you have no more trading. This is the business of eternity! Soul, is there anything left undone? Brother, sister, is there anything left undone? For if you lose this case, you are ruined, and that to all eternity! I pray you to look at this day and at all your days, past and the future, in the light of the day of judgment.

**III.** But my lamp—this matchless lamp—has a third side to it, bright, gleaming like a cluster of stars. The third of the last things is **HEAVEN**, the portion, I trust, of many of us. We hope,

when days and years have passed, that full many of us will meet to part no more on the other side of Jordan, in heaven. Now, let us see if we can cast a little light from heaven upon the things present and the things past. You have been toiling—toiling very hard, and wiping the sweat from your brow and saying, “My lot is not a desirable one; oh how weary I am; I cannot bear it.” Courage, brother! Courage, sister! There is rest for the weary. There is eternal rest for the beloved of the Lord, and when you shall arrive in heaven, how little, how utterly insignificant your toil will seem, even if it shall have lasted threescore years and ten! You are pained much; even now pain shoots through your body; you do not often know what it is to have an easy hour and you half murmur, “Why am I thus? Why did God deal so harshly with me?” Think of heaven, where the inhabitants shall no more say, “I am sick,” where there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Courage, tried one! It will soon be over! It is but a pin’s prick, or a moment’s pang, and then eternal glory! Be of good cheer, and let your patience not fail you. And so you have been slandered. On your face, for Christ’s dear name, shame and reproach have been cast, and you are ready to give up. Come, man, look before you! Can you not hear the acclamations of the angels as the conquerors receive, one by one, their eternal crowns? What? Will you not fight when there is so much to be won? Must you be carried to the skies on flowery beds of *ease*? You must fight if you would reign! Gird up the loins of your mind, and have respect to the recompense of reward. In the light of heaven, the shame of earth will seem to be less than nothing and vanity! And so you have had many losses and crosses—you were once well-to-do—but you are now poor. You will have to go home today to a very poor abode and to a scanty meal. Oh, but beloved, you will not be there long. “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” It is

but an inn you are tarrying at awhile, and, if the accommodation is rough, you are gone tomorrow—so complain not! I would to God we could look upon all our actions in the light of heaven—I mean those who are believers in Jesus Christ. If we could have regrets hereafter, I think it would be that we did not do more than we did for Christ here below. In heaven, they cannot feed Christ's poor, cannot teach the ignorant. They can extol Him with songs of praise, but there are some things in which we have the preference over them—they cannot clothe the naked, or visit the sick, or speak words of cheer to those who are disconsolate. If there is anything that can give joy in heaven, surely it will be in looking back on the divine grace which enabled us to serve the Master! Oh, if I can win souls to Christ, I shall be a gainer as well as you! I shall have another heaven in their heaven, another joy, as it were, in their life, and another happiness in their souls' happiness. And, dear brethren, if in your Sunday school teaching, or visiting, or talking to others, you can bring any to glory, you will, if it is possible, multiply your heaven, and make it all the more glad and joyful! Now, look at the life of some Christians. They come here, and if I preach what they call a good sermon, they like it and drink it in. They are willing to eat the fat, and drink the sweet, but what do they do for Christ? Nothing! What do they give for Christ? Hardly anything. There are a few such among us, and these are generally the most miserable people you meet with—neither a comfort to others, nor any joy to themselves. Now, even in heaven, I think, though no sorrow should be there, it will be only God's wiping it away that will keep them from regretting that they did not do what they might have done on earth! We are saved by grace, blessed be God—by grace alone—but, being saved, we do desire to make known the savor of Christ in every place, and we believe in heaven we shall have joy in having made this known among the sons of men. Look

at your joy in the light of heaven, and you will make it other than it now looks.

**IV.** We now turn to the fourth of the four last things, and that is, let us look at all things in the light of **HELL**, that dread and dismal light, the glare of the fiery abyss. Bring that lantern here. Here is a young man very merry. “Ho! Ho!” he sings, “Christians are fools.” Hold my light up. There you are without God, without hope, with the great iron gate of death shut upon you, and barred forever, your body in the flames of Tophet, and your soul in the yet more horrible flames of the wrath of God. Who is the fool now? Oh, when your spirits are damned, as they must be if you live without a Savior, you will think laughing a poor thing. Laugh now, sir! Scoff now! For a few minutes’ merriment you sold eternal joys. You had a mess of pottage and you ate it in haste, and you sold your birthright. What do you think of it now? It is an awful thing that men should be content, for a few short hours of silly mirth, to fling away their souls. Look at merriment in the glare of the flames of hell. Mark that man in agony down in the vault of hell. He made money by sin, and there he is; he gained the whole world and lost his own soul. How does it look now? “I would give 30,000 pounds,” said an English gentleman when he lay dying, “if any man would prove to me to a demonstration, that there is no hell.” Yes, but if he had given 30,000 *worlds*, that could not be proved, and now, with unutterable pangs, he knows it is so. What would you give, when once you are lost, if you could throw back your gains? If lost spirits could return here, surely they would do what Judas did—throw down the 30 pieces of silver in the temple, and curse themselves that they ever took the gain of this world and destroyed their souls.

And how will unbelief look in the flames of hell? There are no infidels anywhere but on earth—there are none in heaven, and there are none in hell. Atheism is a strange thing. Even the



devils never fell into that vice, for, “The devils believe and tremble.” And there are some of the devil’s children who have gone beyond their father in sin, but how will it look when they are forever lost? When God’s foot crushes them, they will not be able to doubt His existence. When He tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver, then their deceptive conclusions, their empty logic, their brags and bravadoes will be of no use! Oh, that they had been wise, and had not darkened their foolish hearts, but had turned unto the living God!

And, my dear hearers, I have another thought which will come home to some of your spirits with peculiar power. How will *procrastination* seem when once you get there? Some of you have been attending this place a long time—you have often had impressions, but you have always said, “By and by.” “By and by.” You have been awakened, and awakened again, but still it has been, “Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.” How will tomorrow ring in your ears when once you are lost? What would you not give for another day of mercy, another hour of divine grace? I feel, this morning, as if I would do with you what the Roman ambassadors did with Antiochus. They met him, and asked him whether he meant war or peace. He said he must see; and one of them, taking his staff, made a circle round him where he stood, and said, “You must answer before you leave that spot. If you step out of that, it is war. Now, war or peace?” And I, too, would draw a secret circle round you in the pew this morning, and say to you, “Which shall it be, sin or holiness, self or Christ? Shall it be grace or enmity, heaven or hell?” And I pray you answer that question in the light of hell. It is a dread light, but it is a revealing one. It is a fire that will devour the scales that are about your blind eyes. God grant that it may scorch those scales away, that you may see now how dreadful a thing it is to be an enemy to God, and be led by His Holy Spirit to apply to Jesus Christ even now. Ah, how will the

gospel seem in the light of hell, and how will your indifference to it seem?

When I was thinking of preaching this morning, I wished that I could preach as in that light. To think that there are some to whom I have spoken again and again, who during this year have passed away from the world of hope, we fear, into the land of despair, is a dreadful thought! Persons that occupied these pews, sat in these aisles, stood far away there, and listened and heard the gospel—and they are gone! Did I warn them fairly, truly? If not—“If you warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at your hands.” My God, by the blood of the Savior, set me free from these men! Oh, deliver me from that solemn condemnation! But with those of you that still live, I would be clear of you. Dear hearers, do you not feel that you are mortal? Have not you within you a sense that you are dying? It is a thought that is always with me. Life seems so short. It was not so always with me—but the shortness of life now seems to hang over my mind perpetually, and I suppose it must do so over those of you who are thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty, and who frequently see your friends taken away. Now, since you must soon be gone, since there is a world to come, and you believe there is, how can some of you play with these things? How is it that while you are attentive to your business, you leave your soul’s business neglected? What are you waiting for, my hearer? Are you waiting for another season? Does not God say, “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation”? What are you waiting for? Does not the time past suffice? Oh, that you were wise, and would think of your latter end, and seek after God! I entreat you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the terrors of judgment, by the glories of heaven, by the pains of hell—seek after the right way and walk in it. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the gospel, “Whoever believes is not condemned.” To believe

is to trust. Oh, that you may have divine grace to trust your souls with the Lord Jesus now and forever, and then we shall not need to fear those words, “At the last,” nor the light of the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

God bless you, for His name's sake.

“Soon the whole, like a parched scroll,  
Shall before my amazed sight unroll,  
And without a screen at one burst be seen,  
The presence wherein I have ever been.”

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —  
Psalm 148; 2 Corinthians 6.***